

BLUE BOOK

NOVEMBER

MAGAZINE

25 Cents
30¢ IN CANADA



THE PHANTOM PRESIDENT *by George WORTS*

Edgar Rice Burroughs – Valentine Williams
Seven Anderton – Bertram Atkey – Warren Miller and others
\$500 in Cash Prizes for Real Experiences

What We Live By

WE live both by fact and by fiction. Our daily lives deal largely with facts. And facts, God knows, deal largely and hardly with us. Yet our lives would be poor and narrow indeed if we lived by bread—or fact—alone. Hopes and dreams and memories, religions and loves and philosophies—we live by these also. And of these also is fiction made.

All fictions are built out of fact, of course—of the most interesting and significant facts dramatized and placed in perspective. And, curiously, many facts are built of fictions; many an invention was first an imagined fiction (Jules Verne's *Nautilus*, for example) before it became a fact. . . .

It is in recognition of these two major interests of life that this magazine strives to give you both fact and fiction—fact in the real experiences of your fellow-readers and in the autobiographies of specially interesting careers like those of Captain Putta, Armand Brigaud and (in this issue) Captain Dixon; fiction in all its varied forms by the most gifted professional writers.

Conspicuous among the fictions offered you in this issue is that remarkable novel "The Phantom President," by George Worts,

who wrote "Six Seconds Dead." It is indeed in the truest sense a *novel*, in that it gives you something really new—a story based on the fact that to be elected President of these United States a man must be not only able, but popular also. Executive ability, however, does not always accompany the glad hand of popularity. Out of this dilemma, and many other dramatic elements, Mr. Worts has written one of the most powerful novels any magazine ever published.

NOTABLE among the stories of fact is Captain Dixon's "A Million Miles in Sail." For his was a great experience—thirty-five years at sea in windjammers, sixteen times around Cape Horn. And he gives you not only a most engaging story, but much interesting fact as well—facts about temperatures, for instance: the highest he recorded at the equator in scores of crossings was 86°; the lowest in the sixteen voyages around the dreaded Horn was 32½°. How sailors really proceeded to cut away the masts in a storm, how they worked themselves out of all manner of dangers, is most vividly described. . . .

We believe that you will find fact and fiction alike, in the pages which follow, well worth while.

—*The Editor.*

"I Saved Six Orders and Made \$90 in One Day . . . Thanks to This Pocket Volume!"

I'VE only been selling about a year. When I broke in, though I realized that trained salesmen are the highest paid men in the world, I expected the going to be hard at first. It was—a lot harder than I'd expected, even. At the end of six months I was commencing to get discouraged. I certainly hadn't made a profit of it—but I wasn't getting the results I should have had.

Naturally, seeing other fellows who started right with me go right ahead, I realized something was wrong. A particularly disheartening thing was the fact that at times I'd be right on the point of closing a good-sized order—and all of a sudden, it would go "hop." In fact, it kept happening all the time. I was doing something, I knew, that was killing those sales.

Finally I decided that I had to do something. I had been hearing a lot about National Salesmen's Training Association. But I'd never investigated them. Then, one day, I read one of their announcements. I was amazed to find how comprehensively they covered the training of salesmen. Furthermore, they announced that they were sending a most unusual volume, "The Key to Master Salesmanship" to ambitious men who asked for it—not only experienced salesmen, but men who had never sold, but wanted a chance in this highly paid field.

Naturally, I wrote for it—it seemed to me that here was the certain solution to the errors I had been making. Imagine my surprise—and interest—when they arrived, not only one book, but two. To this day I can't decide which of those books helped me most. The little book which I had not been expecting was just what I needed at the time. It was written for men just like me—men who had been plugging along in salesmanship—never successful, never so hopeless that they quit selling. And while "The Key to Master Salesmanship" gave me an insight into the real secrets of salesmanship, the other book, "Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling" was the one I could



first get practical use from.

Right in the first few pages, I saw some examples quoted. They were things I had been doing every day. I'd never dreamed they were dangerous errors. The more I thought about them, the more clear it became, though, why I was having such difficulty with my closes. I thought to myself: "By golly, that's why Barnes decided to put off buying, this very afternoon!" I kept on thinking of men whose orders I had lost, through just that very mistake. There were six of them.

The next morning, I sallied out, bright and early to see if I couldn't save those sales, using the tips given me. Before noon, I had put the practical suggestions of that little book to work—and sure enough, in every case, I made the sale which I had thought was gone glimmering. Six sales saved—at \$15 commission apiece, that was \$90 made, by one morning's work, plus the advice of a little book that cost me nothing!

Of course, that set me to thinking. If that one piece of knowledge could make me \$90, how much would I make out of having all the knowledge which

the National Salesmen's Training Association could give me? It didn't take long to figure that one out, either! I was enrolled for the full training that same night; and the next two weeks saw my sales record soar. Not a minute of time lost—I studied just in spare hours, but I learned things in those spare hours that I'd never have picked up, just by my own experience.

Today, I find amazing increase in the volume of my sales now over what they were a year ago. Then I was selling only about 40% of my quota—this month, with a quota twice as high as it used to be, I'm 50% over! And you know what quantity production means when the bonus checks roll around!

Today, any man who wants to see how to end some of his biggest sales weaknesses can learn from this book some of the most fre-



quent mistakes which spoil sales, and get practical suggestions how to end them. Not a penny of obligation—"Mistakes Commonly Made in Selling" is now FREE to any ambitious man. At the same time we will send you, also free, the new and finer edition of "The Key to Master Salesmanship" which since its publication has been read by many men who have got into the biggest pay class of salesmanship. Write for both these valuable volumes now—the coupon will bring them by return mail.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASSOCIATION

Dept. S-34, 21 W. Elm St., Chicago, Illinois

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Dept. S-34, 21 W. Elm St., Chicago, Ill.

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The BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER, 1931

Vol. 54, No. 1

Two Important Serials

The Phantom President By George F. Worts 8
 The strange story of the Prisoner of the White House.

The Triumph of Tarzan By Edgar Rice Burroughs 42
 New exploits of fiction's champion adventurer in defense of his African jungle.

Memorable Short Stories and Features

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 A dramatic romance of the Southwest.

Old Government Java By Warren Hastings Miller 31
 The first of a fine group dealing with white men in the Tropics.

Half a Horse By M. Bowman Howell 38
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 A vivid story of the football field by a man who knows a lot about it.

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 A daring young reporter has a close call indeed.

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The Miner's Right By Jack McLaren 133
 A desperate race to file a claim at Thursday Island.



LELAND

JAMIESON

HE'S been an army pilot, a mail pilot and an air-mail operations manager—and you probably recall some of the excellent stories of sky-adventure he has contributed to these pages. Next month he will offer an authentic and swift-moving novelette that you must not miss. Watch for it under the title:

“Winged Victory”

THE MCCALL COMPANY, Publisher, The Blue Book Magazine

WILLIAM B. WARNER, President and Treasurer

JOHN C. STERLING, Vice-President

DONALD KENNICOTT, Editor

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HOLMAN DAY in "JUSTICE ON THE JUMP" ("Go to court, hey, and expect right and justice? Yah-h-h! Like you'd look for ice-cream in hell.")

With

ARTHUR AKERS in "A Black-hand Boomerang." (Willie Freeman couldn't write, but he could make a mean mark. So could his wife Beulah, when she crowned him with a flatiron. So could his brother-in-law, that noted colored pugilist the Bogalusa Bearcat.)

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The Phantom President

One man had all the qualifications for the Presidency—except the warmth and magnetism which win popularity and elections.

Another man had all the qualifications for the penitentiary—but his wit and his smile kept him free. These two men resembled each other.

Around this strange situation the author of "Six Seconds Dead" has built up this, the most remarkable novel we have read in years.

By

GEORGE F. WORTS

Illustrated by Joseph Franké

THUNDER clouds were gathering over Steel City when the limousine containing the Big Four swung out of the bluestone driveway into Pershing Boulevard. These clouds drank up what little light of day remained and charged the air with tension.

Distant arpeggios in the bass register, and tremendous crashing discords overhead might have been an orchestral accompaniment to a drama of cosmic importance, or its prologue; or they might have been the laughter of the gods.

Three of the four were embarking for Washington on the Eastern Limited in eleven minutes. Powerful men, these four—molders of a nation's destiny, arbiters of the fates of Presidents, ambassadors and Cabinet members—the ruling oligarchy of North America.

They had reluctantly reached the decision this afternoon that Theodore K. Blair, the Steel City capitalist, was not, despite his ability, the man of the hour. And they had, with becoming delicacy, refrained from consulting Theodore K. Blair, although Blair expected them—had counted on the conference.

Rain drummed on the limousine roof. The drumming increased to an angry roar. Trees danced crazily in the wind. The boulevard dissolved into a purple half-world, shot with blinding flashes. Lightning struck not far away with an awful detonation. The limousine crawled, then stopped. The chauffeur was unable to see through that lashing fog of rain.

One of the four, their leader, was shaking in an ague of fear. Lightning terrified him. He would miss the East-

ern Limited. The next fast train for Washington would not leave for four hours. Theodore K. Blair's sandstone mansion was at the next corner—a refuge, the nearest refuge.

Having created history, having twisted and tangled the destinies of many men, the storm pushed on to the north...

Thunder-clouds were forming in threatening masses over Bessemer Street when the man with the steel hand sent his motorcycle roaring down the grade which ended in the blast-furnace section of Steel City. These clouds zoomed across the sky from the south, squadrons of green and black, packing the air with menace and pushing ahead of them a hoodlum wind which set trees to jiggling and dust to rolling.

The man with the steel hand opened the throttle; but the motorcycle could go no faster. It was old—a cleverly restored antique. It was a marvel of reconstruction, and the steel hand which controlled it, with its articulating fingers, its wonderful piano-wire tendons, was a marvel of mechanical ingenuity. The man on the motorcycle had lost his right hand in a cylinder-boring machine; he had spent months in building this steel substitute.

The road ahead was suddenly a shivering blackness of rain. Rain sliced from his cap, ran in rivulets down his face, stung his eyes like hail. Blinded, the man with the steel hand applied his brake. The rear tire slipped on the wet pavement; the motorcycle went out of control.

A blazing white spear stabbed into the junk-yard on his left. The earth and the air rocked with the thunderclap.

The man with the steel hand tried to throw himself clear, but his steel hand became wedged in the throttle-control rod on the handlebar. Machine and man crashed into a telephone-pole. . . .

The headlights of a workingman's sedan found him a few minutes later, unconscious from the blow his head had received. The steel hand was smashed beyond repair.

The storm, having completely changed the course of his life, having marked him for a fateful rôle in the careers of many men, pushed on to the north. . . .

Thunder-clouds were darkening the sunset sky when

up and into the road. The rubber swab was attending to the molten crystal now, but the road ahead had suddenly gone mad. Branches wrenched off by the wind were flung into it. A spinning cone of wet leaves came charging. The impact of the miniature cyclone made the roadster stagger.

The pursuing lights in the mirror glowed dimly—as



Three men filed in and looked about the room. When their eyes reached Varney, they stopped. "It's him!" said one.

close, or closer. He wished he had taken greater pains, selected a faster car. This one had looked like the fastest in the parking compound. Its aluminum hood was a delusion. Pistons pumped oil, and there was a wicked wrist-pin slap. Never be misled by the label on the

bottle! He must shake off that car and that cop. If he only knew this road, he might. But he had never traveled it before. It kept curving. Curves were ugly if you didn't know how long they kept curving.

Rain thumped on the misleading aluminum hood in drops so large that their rebound made a haze almost too dense to see through.

A black tree ahead leaned drunkenly over the road. The rogue realized it was falling, but falling so slowly, so majestically, that it seemed to be poised there. There was a slim chance that he might shoot under it.

He held himself ready for several tons of wet black trunk to crash through the khaki roof. The crash was thunderous. He felt the wrench as the spare-tire frame on back took the blow and fell free.

Cold sweat prickled on the rogue's forehead. That had been too close! Luck had almost stopped throwing naturals. But he was safe. That old monarch would block the pursuit, prevent his capture.

The antic storm, having accomplished this, pushed on. He took to looking now for a side road. A mile beyond he found one, leading off to the right—a pair of pa-

the rogue in the aluminum roadster rocketed through Brookdale, defying two red traffic-lights and the squeal of a policeman's whistle. Reaching across the sky from the south, these clouds were like the paws of a monster.

As the saffron glow gave way to greasy darkness, the rogue snapped on his headlights and glanced at the mirror. Two spots of white glitter behind him were joined by a third. His speedometer wheeled to seventy again—wide open. A black-bordered yellow sign flashed across the lights, and he learned that Steel City was twelve miles away. He might make it if they didn't overtake him or telephone ahead to set a trap.

A deluge suddenly blackened the road and reduced the windshield to molten crystal. He fumbled for the release button on the wiper. Visibility came to an end. There was nothing but a vague silver glow beyond flowing water. The roadster swerved. Its right wheels plowed the soft shoulder. The sudden drag jerked the wheel from his hand. The roadster plunged down the slope and into the ditch. He shoved the gearshift into second and trod on the accelerator as ditch-water fountained over the roof. With a grinding snarl, the roadster clawed its way back

... filled with muddy water. He eased the roadster into the ruts and followed the mud road for a quarter-mile. Luck was still throwing naturals.

It was an abandoned cowshed, hardly more than a lean-to; but its tar-paper roof was tight, it was miles from any visible habitation, and the hayfield across from it was high and reasonably dry.

He maneuvered the car about until the headlights and radiator were just inside the lean-to. The lights were necessary for the next act on his program; the lean-to wall would prevent his pursuers from seeing them.

He got out, taking with him a large black suitcase cuffed brown at the corners and plastered with hotel stickers. This he opened on a convenient vegetable crate. He removed from it a shaving mirror, shaving paraphernalia, a tube of cold cream, a packet of crêpe-paper towels.

A glint of metal attracted him to the other end of the shed. He picked up an empty condensed milk can. The skin at the corners of his eyes crinkled. His kind are philosophers. The mighty machinery behind this tin can was perhaps responsible for the lean-to being abandoned. He pictured a poor dairy-farmer crushed under the wheels of this juggernaut age. It paid, he reflected, to be one jump ahead. It paid to be smart.

With the relic of mechanical triumph in his hand—it would serve nicely as a shaving mug—he lounged against a post under the roof overhang and watched the highway until darting streaks of white light assured him that the car and the motor-cop had surmounted the fallen monarch and dashed on down the road in pursuit of him.

He hung the mirror on a rusty nail on the side wall nearest the headlights, and unscrewed the cap from the cold-cream tube. The well-lighted face in the mirror was that of a man between thirty-five and forty, containing no symptoms of slackness. Tanned skin fitted upon it tightly. Eyes were blue and sparkling with the excitement of living. Eyebrows were black and very thick. The mouth was happy. The wrinkles fanning from the eye-corners, taken with the tanned skin, the mouth and the reckless jaw-line, gave this fellow the look of a humor-loving adventurer; a man who lived to laugh, whose hardness was saved for life's cruel emergencies.

He squeezed a dollop of cold-cream onto his fingertips and rubbed it briskly into his face, starting with the forehead and applying it to eyelids, nose, cheeks, ears, chin and neck. He worked the white grease in vigorously and swabbed it off with paper towels. His face emerged from the false tan a clear, healthy white. The old complexion fell to the floor on wads of crêpe-paper.

Rain drummed cozily on the tar-paper roof. Now and then the world shook with thunder as licking glares of green-white lighted up acres of clouds, or crooked rods of incandescence struck at the earth. The sweet fragrance of washed fields, of woods in fresh rain, stole into the shed. The storm retreated.

THE rogue removed his slicker and tossed it over a mudguard. He ran steaming water from the radiator drain-cock into the condensed-milk can. He lathered his eyebrows, worked the lather in with fingertips, and shaved until the brows were less than half their thickness. Rinsing off the lather, he regarded himself critically.

Strange, he reflected, what a difference a few trifling alterations can make in a man's face. Gone was the happy adventurer. In his place was a cheerful business-man.

The rogue quickly undressed to his underwear, then unwrapped from white tissue a dinner suit, shirt, collar, tie, studs and patent-leather slippers. Little gestures, as he

into them, betrayed him as a frequent occupant of garments.

When the tie satisfied him, he packed his other clothes in the suitcase, placed it in the roadster, slipped into the black slicker, and started the motor. So far, O. K.!

Twenty minutes later he entered the grubby outskirts of Steel City. He had not visited the place in a dozen years; but his acquaintance with cities like it led him intuitively through back streets until he reached the north-and-south thoroughfare he wanted. Harper Street. Turning into it, he realized he was inviting trouble. The alarm would be out for the aluminum roadster. But he had not far to go, and the rain would keep most of the police indoors.

At Washington Street he turned west, and driving slowly, scrutinized the house-numbers. The houses were all of a type: narrow-shouldered, bay-windowed, of darkly painted brick, all reduced to one nameless brownish tint by that common leveler, factory smoke.

When the rogue had found the number he sought, he drove on to the end of the block, cut the ignition switch, turned off the lights, seized his black suitcase, and departed. The sooner he ceased to be identified with that roadster, the better.

Given enough time, he would have hardly required the minute directions he had followed. His seasoned instincts would have led him unerringly to this neighborhood. Something about the speak-easy neighborhoods of large cities sets them apart.

He pressed a button, and a man in a rumpled white shirt and badly fitting evening clothes came to the elaborately scrolled iron grille and peered at him.

"Friend of Jimmy Carlyle's," the rogue said. "You Tony?"

"Yes sir."

A latch clicked, and the iron door opened. The rogue stepped into an amber-lighted hallway.

"Any other guests?"

"No sir. You're the first. It is early."

"Stick this suitcase somewhere," the rogue said. "And put this slicker away too. Anybody in the bar?"

"Only the bartender and the waiter."

"No cops?"

"No sir, no cops."

"I want a table."

"Yes sir."

"Has Mr. Carlyle telephoned? My name is Varney."

"No, Mr. Varney."

"That's odd."

Tony's dining-room was filled with small square tables and smaller round tables. The square ones were set for four, the round ones for two. The rogue seated himself at a table for two.

"How is business, Tony?"

"Terrible—simply terrible."

"How long has dinner been ready?"

"Since noon. With business so bad, luncheon and dinner are the same."

"I've been here an hour and a half."

Tony Moretti's small black eyes ceased being humble and shifty. When Peter Varney removed from his pocket a well-packed billfold, they settled to a steady, hard stare. He counted out two fifty-dollar bills and two twenties. Laying these on the table, he put the billfold back.

"One hundred is for you. Twenty apiece for your waiter and your bartender. Put an empty wine-bottle and an empty wineglass on this table. Melt some ice cream and bring it in a dish. Don't forget the demi-tasse—and a brandy-glass a quarter full. You might sprinkle some cigarette-ashes on the tablecloth. Atmosphere!"

Tony placed his small yellow hands on the table-edge and bent close without shifting his eyes.

"Murder?" he said. But he did not pronounce the word. His lips and tongue silently went through the motions.

"I'll make a deal with you, Tony. If the cops come, let your conscience be your guide. I don't think they will come. Perhaps I am too cautious. The chances against the cops coming are a hundred to one."

"I can't afford trouble with the cops. They are bleeding me to death as it is," said Tony determinedly.

"You won't have trouble with the cops. If they come, I will handle them. All I ask of you is a realistic air of innocence. You will flutter about like a moth. Then you will take them into the bar and probably give them needed beer."

"I don't get you," Tony said.

"But I won't alibi you if it gets me in wrong. What have you been doing?"

"I am the victim of a cruel misunderstanding."

Tony dropped his eyes to the money, lifted them back to the rogue's face. They tried to stare through his eyes, to worry out the thought lying behind their baffling sparkle.

"Your face is familiar," he said. "You look like somebody."

The rogue laughed. "Don't you know who I am? Look again. Think hard!"

"I can't quite place you. But I know you are somebody."

"Let it go at that."

Tony decided to let it go at that. He picked up the bills and walked out of the room.

Presently he returned with a stolid waiter who carried a tray containing not only the items Peter Varney had specified, but an ash-tray full of realistic cigarette-stubs as well. Two minutes later the table looked as though Peter Varney was just finishing a leisurely course dinner.

The irony of it was that he was ravenously hungry. But he was accustomed to ironical situations. They provided the salt of existence.

He wished he had parked that roadster farther away. Then these elaborate arrangements would have been unnecessary. But he had not dared be identified with it an instant longer. Divorced from the roadster, he was comparatively safe.

He would have felt safer if he had been fleeing from one crime instead of two. Yet the episode of the Green Plains Tavern could hardly be classed as a crime. It was the fillip of a hard, practical sense of humor. A master of arrogant enterprises, Peter Varney was ordinarily above such picayune diversions. Far beneath his peculiar talents, it had been merely a quick and easy way of lining his pockets.

The striking-down of Chester Ingals was a horse of another color.



The man's steel hand became wedged in the throttle-control rod; machine and man crashed into a telephone-pole.

He had met her this night, in the terraced garden behind her house, to say good-by—good-by forever. She told him he was like lava flowing out of a volcano. He scorched whoever ventured near him; you couldn't alter his course.

"Some day you'll fall hissing into a sea, and that will be the end of you."

It was probably the heated blood in her own veins that made her employ such phrases.

"Ol' man river," he said, "keeps on rollin' along!"

Her thin arms were fiercely about his neck, her soft, poppy-red lips were fastened on his, when her husband walked out onto the terrace with a gun in his hand—a black automatic pistol.

The rogue had dealt before with men carrying guns. He spun out of Kate Ingals' arms, grabbed the gun as it went off almost in his face. The blue-red flame all but blinded him. But he had the gun. He smashed Chester Ingals in the left temple with it.

Considering her temperament, Kate Ingals remained marvelously calm. She took it, so to speak, in her stride. She watched her husband fall dead—or nearly dead—without screaming. She lost none of her pretty color. It was as if she were playing a part in a familiar scene. You would have said she was underplaying the part. But she would feast on that thrilling moment.

CHAPTER II

WHETHER or not Varney had killed Kate Ingals' husband was a problem for tomorrow morning's papers to resolve. If Chester Ingals lived, there would be trouble. If he did not live, there might be trouble. It depended largely on the woman in the case.

The rogue had met Kate Ingals in a Springfield speakeasy some weeks before: an intensely dissatisfied young woman with honey-yellow hair, hard blue eyes, a thin, beautiful body, and lips too soft and red for her own good. She was a distinct type of American womanhood—what the tabloids murkily describe as love-hungry—oversexed, restless and an excitement-hunter.

She had wanted to burn her fingers. Certainly, he had not encouraged her. Out of love with her Babbitt, she had been hungrily ready for the first man's half-lidded glance.

He had played fair. With nothing to do but wait in Springfield

for word from Jimmy Carlyle, he surrendered his time to Kate Ingals' whims. There were endless arguments for and against their running away. He didn't want to run away. He didn't want Kate Ingals. He didn't want a woman; women held a dimming lens to life.



He held himself ready The crash was thunderous; he felt the wrench as the spare-tire frame took the blow.

Her voice under perfect control, she said: "Go away, Peter. Don't ever come back. You've done me a great favor. I'll see that you aren't involved. It was some hold-up man. Run!"

She would protect him. The rogue knew women. She would protect him if she had to give her own life to do it. But she wouldn't give her own life. Life was too thrilling. She would sob for the homicide squad, and for the coroner's jury. The police would parade suspects before her by the dozen. No prosecutor would be foolish enough to indict that slender flame of beauty.

She would do her best to protect Peter Varney. Yet she could not save him from the glasslike surface of an automatic pistol's barrel, with its remarkable capacity of retaining the prints of hot fingers

A bell jingled remotely. Peter Varney picked up the brandy-glass and watched the door. Within ten minutes two couples and a party of four had come in. The next arrivals were six college students who went whooping into the bar. The rogue wondered why Carlyle didn't come or telephone

An irritable voice said: "We'll look in the bar. You look in there."

Three men quickly filed in from the hall. Peter Varney sipped brandy and innocently eyed them. The first was a motorcycle policeman. The left shoulder of his coat was gray with drying mud. The other two men he recognized. One wore a canary-yellow sweater and brown

knickers and was named Salter. The other, in blue blazer and white flannels, was Hoyt.

The three men looked about the room. When their eyes reached him, they stopped. The eyes of Salter and Hoyt looked strained.

"It's him," Salter said.

"It looks like him," Hoyt said; "but it isn't him."

"Just the same, I'm going to ask some questions."

Salter came over. The motorcycle policeman and Hoyt followed. Tony had come in behind them. His white face was a portrait of anxiety.

"I beg your pardon," Salter said.

The rogue gave him a surprised smile. Salter peered at him and tightened his lips. "Would you mind answering some questions?"

"Not at all!"

He indicated a chair, but Salter did not sit down. The motorcycle policeman and Hoyt were now standing on either side of him. They were both looking at the rogue's shirt bosom.

"Is this the guy?" the motorcycle policeman asked.

"Wait a minute," Salter said. "How long have you been here?"

"This is very mysterious," Varney said. "Am I suspected of something?"

"Do you have to annoy this gentleman?" Tony intruded.

"He has been in here almost two hours."

Hoyt looked embarrassed; Salter remained suspicious.

"What do you know about that aluminum roadster out there?"

"I'm sure," Varney replied, "I don't know anything about an aluminum roadster. Is there one out there?"

"This isn't the man," Hoyt said. "Let's get going. There are three more speak-easies in this block. We beg your pardon."

"Not yet," Salter said.

"I wish," said the rogue, "you'd tell me what's happened. Has some one committed a crime?"

"Some one," Salter said, "took me and this gentleman for eight hundred dollars. And I'll be damned if you don't look like the man who did it!"

"Oh, take it easy," Hoyt growled.

"I'll be damned if I will! I want my four hundred."

The rogue leaned back in his chair. "Robbery?"

"Just the same! A con game."

"The bent-dime gag," the motorcycle policeman put in.

"Is this the guy, gents?"

"I think so," Salter growled.

"Positively not!" Hoyt said.

Peter Varney spread out his hands. "I wish I could help you, but I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. What is the bent-dime gag?"

"The guy was a dime-bender," the motorcycle policeman answered. "That's his racket."

"It was like this," Hoyt explained. "This gentleman and I were in the bar of the Green Plains tavern when this fellow came in."

"What fellow?"

"The one who got our money. We were having a drink, and he joined us. I don't know how he managed it, but he horned in. First thing we knew, we were all doing bar tricks. I don't know how anything happened. He was too smooth for me. But he got around to this dime trick. He said he could bend a dime with his fingers."

"It's the oldest barroom gag there is," the cop put in.

"Salter and I," Hoyt went on, "each tried to bend a dime. We said it couldn't be done. What's more, it can't be done. No man alive can bend a dime with his fingers. This fellow said he could. We bet him he couldn't. He was so smooth we didn't even make him show his money."

"Four hundred dollars?" Varney interrupted.

"Four hundred from each of us!"

"It's incredible."

"I'll say it's incredible, but he got away with it. Don't ask me how he got us to bet so much money. We were suckers. He just took us for a ride."

"How did he work it?"

"He got us to bet; then he took a dime—a good dime—and squeezed it between his thumb and fingers—and it came out bent."

"Show him the dime," the cop suggested.

HOYT fished in his pocket and produced a dime which was bent sharply down the middle. The rogue examined it. "Amazing," he breathed. "How was the trick done?"

"He had a bent dime ready. He must have bent it in a vise with a pair of pincers. He substituted it for the flat one. He put it against his two fingers with his thumb—like this. He squeezed until his face turned red and his eyes bulged. And the dime came out of his fingers—bent!"

"Oldest barroom gag there is," the cop repeated. "Then he stole a ten-thousand-dollar roadster and crashed every traffic light between here and Green Plains. But gents, we're wasting our time. Is this him, or isn't it?"

"He was tanned and he had thick eyebrows," Hoyt said doubtfully. "And I remember he wore a dark gray suit."

"Then this isn't him."

"I want him arrested," Salter said, "on suspicion."

A new voice said: "Got him?"

Peter Varney looked at the red-faced newcomer, quickly classifying him.

"This gentleman?" the detective asked.

"That's the man we're looking for," Salter declared.

The detective was staring at Peter Varney. "This gentleman?" he repeated in a shocked voice. "You're very much mistaken. This gentleman is"—he paused—"Mr. Theodore K. Blair."

Salter took a backward step as if he had been sharply punched. He turned pale. He licked his lips. His eyes were horrified.

"Good Lord, Mr. Blair, if I'd dreamed—"

"It was unpardonable," Hoyt panted. "Please accept our apologies. Please accept our humblest apologies."

"I wouldn't have had this happen—" Salter began, but choked again.

The rogue smiled indulgently. "You haven't offended me," he said. "I quite understand how you feel."

CHAPTER III

THEODORE K. BLAIR was seated at the desk in his library with his elbows on the gold-mounted blotter, the tips of his fingers pressed tightly together, his clear blue eyes following the shallow, saturnine face of Harvey Ronkton. Every ounce of his amazing mental vitality was concentrated on Harvey Ronkton. The other three men might have been non-existent. What Ronkton said, they would agree to. His fate was in Ronkton's hands.

Niles De Kay, the boss of the Middle West, and Senators Melrose and Pitcairn sat in a row facing the magnificent walnut desk. It should have been in a museum. Like judges at a cattle-show, the three men watched Theodore K. Blair, estimating him, appraising him, gauging his weaknesses.

In important conferences Harvey Ronkton never sat. He always stood and walked. In the famous three-day conference which, in 1928, brought about the merger of one hundred and forty-two banks into a nation-wide chain, it was estimated that he had walked upwards of forty miles, up and down a rug. He called it perambulatory cogitation.

The fine old Bokhara rug on the floor of the Blair library was nicely suited to perambulatory cogitation. One wide reddish-brown border running the length of it was free of obstructions. He could freely perambulate up and down, up and down. Theodore K. Blair had seen to that beforehand, had had furniture shifted about so that Ronkton could indulge his whim.

This conference, if it came off satisfactorily, was by way of being the biggest forward step Blair had ever taken. Out of it he might emerge the next President of the United States. The question was: Did Theodore K. Blair have the necessary qualifications? He thought so, but he knew that Harvey Ronkton thought otherwise. If he could convince Ronkton that he was wrong, then the greatest hour of his life was striking.

A cigar-but, no more than an inch in length, was tucked into one corner of Ronkton's big, rubbery mouth. It might have been tacked there. He was never seen without a cigar-but, about an inch in length. Few newspaper photographs of him did not show the cigar-but. But he was seldom photographed. He disliked publicity.

Reaching the end of the border, Harvey Ronkton turned and started back. His air was that of a man on an unpleasant errand.

"If we are going to get anywhere," he said in his high-pitched, gritty voice, "we have got to be brutally frank. After all, Blair, it isn't a question of your fitness. We know you're a business genius. We know you're the cleverest practical economist in America, if not in the world. We are fully aware that your brain in the White House would do just as much for the country as it has done for the Universal Corporation. That is not the point."

He pronounced it "*pern't*." A mysterious and powerful figure, Ronkton was a product of gutters, of New York's scrabbling, lusty, overcrowded East Side. He had blacked boots, sold newspapers, pushed carts. He had starved and begged and no doubt stolen. He was certainly a self-made man. From a popular viewpoint, he was the most typical American in the room.

REACHING the end of the rug, he turned and started back. No; that wasn't the point. Theodore K. Blair knew it wasn't the point. So did these three lesser magistrates sitting in judgment on his fitness.

"As far as the country's needs are concerned," Ronkton went on, "you are the ideal man for the Presidency. You have built with your own brain the greatest corporation in America. You have solved unemployment problems in wonderful ways. You have forged into one great manufacturing and distributing system hundreds of warring factions. Your million employees and your hundreds and thousands of stockholders are happy. You have accomplished all this through your amazing ability to diagnose a sick situation and prescribe the proper cure. You could cure America with the same methods. But that is not the point."

Ronkton's hairy brown hands were clasped behind him. He was walking more rapidly, talking more rapidly.

"I know," he went on, "that you have agents, on your personal pay-roll, studying political and industrial conditions in all parts of the country and all parts of the world. You are no doubt the best-informed man on world affairs alive. You know, within a few hours, the latest developments in the Soviet's Five-year Plan; the power, within an ounce, of the Spanish Republicans; the sincerity, down to the finest shading, of the war-talk in Germany, Italy and elsewhere. You have prepared yourself for the Presidency, and you are mentally better equipped for the Presidency than any man who has been in the White House. But that is not the point."

He paused, looked back over his wide, sloping shoulder at the man at the desk, and said: "The point is, Blair, that not once in your life has a man, woman or child called you Ted or Teddy."

Theodore K. Blair, with his finger-tips pressed so tightly together that the nails were white, remained silent, and except for his eyes, motionless. His chin was sunk into his collar. The pallor of his face, taken with the blackness of his dinner-coat, made him seem severe and remote. His eyes, as Harvey Ronkton paced the border, slid slowly from side to side. His brain was several rug-lengths ahead of Ronkton's. Blair knew that he was to be denied the opportunity for which he had been preparing. He had thoroughly, scientifically, made himself fit for the Presidency. Behind this effort was, only in a small part, personal ambition; the essence of his motive was patriotism. Notoriously detached from public affairs, he was intensely patriotic. In his detachment lay the success of his visions. He saw, in the United States, a vast and wonderful land of fertile plains, of fabulous mines and oil reserves, of tremendous industrial energy, of magnificent possibilities, but all at odds. He saw the country as a sick and uncertain giant, just as he had seen the Universal Corpora-

tion when he took hold of it. His attitude took no account of modesty or of egotism. He felt simply that he was fit to handle a great problem. He was prepared to step in and undertake the colossal task of reconstruction. He was thoroughly prepared.

But he had neglected to have people call him *Teddy*.

"You are the strangest man in America," Harvey Ronkton went on, in his high voice. "I have speculated about you for years. You are like a big spider,—oh, don't mistake me!—a very useful and benevolent spider. This room is your cave. Here you sit, day by day, spinning your web. You don't go near your office twice a week. Your corporation's problems are fetched to you here—on platinum platters, I suppose. You sit at that desk and think and think. By-and-by you digest the problem and hand it back to the corporation, neatly solved—tied up in pink ribbon. That's the trouble. It's wonderful, but it's the trouble. You aren't a man; you're a thinking machine. You're a genius. But can you throw a baseball? Did you ever go down the street patting little children on the head and giving apples to horses?"

Theodore K. Blair smiled at the picture.

"While a talking picture-machine grinds?" he dryly asked. There was laughter in his deep voice. He saw himself giving an apple to the horse. The horse, not liking apples or strangers, would try to bite him.

"I thought," he said, "politicians had stopped kissing babies and stroking lost dogs."

"Do you play games? Golf? Tennis?"

"I play chess."

"There you are! A mental game!"

"I play it for relaxation."

"The trouble is, Blair, you have absolutely no popular appeal."

Niles De Kay, the boss of the Middle West, had been fidgeting uncomfortably.

"We didn't come here," he said, "to insult Mr. Blair."

HARVEY RONKTON did not reply until he had reached the end of the rug and turned.

"We are dealing bluntly with a tough problem," he said. "I want to see Blair in the White House. I think he belongs there. But I don't know how to put him there. He is aloof and remote and cold. He is a human iceberg."

Senator Pitcairn suggested that Mr. Blair could be built up.

"It's happened before. Look what a few Indian feathers and a couple of cowboy hats did for Calvin Coolidge. He looked so miserable in the photographs that people liked him. Remember how the people warmed to Hoover when he brought that kid to Washington who saved the children in that Colorado blizzard."

"Blair isn't Coolidge," Ronkton said, "and he isn't Hoover. We can't dress him in Indian feathers or have him suddenly begin entertaining heroes. He isn't the type. That's the trouble. He's too true to type—the aloof mental type. The people don't want a Thinking Theodore in the White House. They want a—a—"

"Thespian *Teddy*," Blair completed.

"They liked Roosevelt because they could call him *Teddy*."

"It went deeper than that," Senator Melrose objected. "He had been a *Rough Rider*."

"Roosevelt had a warm personality," Ronkton said.

"The trouble with me," Blair said, "is that I haven't enough Jimmy Walker in my *cosmos*."

"Roosevelt," Ronkton went on, "was elected for his personality, not his ability. People elect their leaders for their appeal."

"What," Blair asked, "have the people to say about it? They don't elect the President. You four select him."

"We four," Ronkton answered, "select a man we think is fit to head the Prosperity Party. Another group of men selects a man they think is fit to head the opposition. The best pickers win."

Theodore Blair smiled again. "What are you gentlemen going to do about me?"

"We don't know," Ronkton replied. "There are so many things against you: Your coldness, your remoteness, your youth. You're only thirty-seven. There's never been a President so young. You're a bachelor, too. Women won't vote for you. Women are suspicious of bachelors. They claim a bachelor of thirty-seven is either an old maid or an old roué. Women want their public men married. Marriage means stability."

"Blair might get married," Senator Pitcairn suggested. "A romance would certainly bring him close to the hearts of the people."

"Blair," Ronkton said, "hasn't time for women. Have you, Blair?"

"I have time for one woman," Blair answered.

The four men looked at him with sudden interest.

"Who is she?" they asked in chorus.

"Felicia Hamilton."

"Cornelius Hamilton's daughter?" Ronkton exclaimed.

"Yes."

"Well, why didn't you say so before?"

"It didn't seem timely."

"Are you engaged to Miss Hamilton?"

"No."

"Do you mean 'not yet'?"

"No. I mean, no."

"Won't she marry you?"

"She hasn't said she would."

"Have you asked her?"

Blair nodded, smiling slightly. "Dozens of times."

"And she said no?"

"Yes. No."

Harvey Ronkton had grown somewhat excited. He had unclasped his hands and shoved them into his pants pockets. His stride had lengthened and quickened.

"But she'd say yes if you were nominated. She'd do that as her patriotic duty."

"She doesn't believe in patriotic duty."

"Have you mentioned it?"

"Naturally, not."

"Well, mention it now. If her father would announce your engagement to her, it would be a great help. Isn't she a descendant of Alexander Hamilton?"

"I think she is."

"That would be a wonderful help, Blair—a wonderful



The rogue spun out of Kate Ingals' arms, grabbed the gun and smashed Chester Ingals in the left temple with it.

help. Will you talk to her? Will you talk to her tonight?"

"I'm having dinner there at eight. I'll talk to her afterward."

"You don't seem to have much confidence."

"I haven't much confidence. I know her too well."

"That's absurd. There isn't a girl in the United States who wouldn't jump at the chance to marry a man who's going to be President."

"Yes, there is," Blair said. "And her name is Felicia Hamilton."

"It can't be as bad as that, Blair. What's the matter with her? You're young, attractive, rich, powerful. Why won't she fall for you?"

"Perhaps," Blair dryly answered, "for the same reason that the American people won't vote for me. Perhaps she wants a Thespian Teddy, not a Thinking Theodore."

"You could marry some other girl."

"But I won't."

"Not even for the Presidency?"

"Not even for the Presidency."

"Then we're right back where we were before. Why won't Felicia marry you?"

"Because Felicia doesn't love me."

"Gentlemen," Harvey Ronkton said, coming to a stop in the middle of the rug, "I am frankly stumped. Here is the one man in the country we want in the White House. And we can't put him there."

"It has occurred to me," Blair said, "that the voters may be tired of catchwords and nicknames: that they may be ready to vote for a man of demonstrated ability."

"The people," Ronkton said, "won't vote for a thinking machine."

"Then am I eliminated?"

"I won't say so finally. I want to think some more. Run along to your dinner date. We may drop in again later."

The four politicians departed. Theodore K. Blair sat at his desk for some time, with his elbows on the gold-mounted blotter, his finger-tips pressed tightly together. It was his habitual attitude when he was thinking.

He was trying to find some germ of hope, but he knew there was no germ of hope to find. Harvey Ronkton had bluntly stated the truth. He was nothing but a thinking machine: Cold and remote, the aloof mental type, the human iceberg. No popular appeal. The man no one called *Teddy*. Even Felicia didn't call him *Teddy* or *Ted*. She called him *Theodore* or *T. K.*

Blair pressed a desk button. When his butler appeared, he told him to send in Mrs. Martin. And when his housekeeper entered, he asked her where her daughter was.

"In her room, Mr. Blair."

"Playing with her dolls?"

"No sir. Doing her school work."

"Will you bring her here a moment?"

"Certainly, Mr. Blair."

The thought occurred to him that he had probably spoken no more than a dozen words to the child since her mother had been his housekeeper.

The little girl came into the library. Blair wondered how old she was. She was a pale little girl with curly black hair which hung to her shoulders. Her eyes were large with terror.

"Hello," he said.

"Good evening, Mr. Blair."

"I don't know your name. What's your name?"

"Martha, sir."

"How old are you, Martha?"

"Eleven, sir."

BLAIR leaned forward and looked up into her scared face with a beguiling smile. He could not have realized how terrifying that smile was to a girl of eleven.

"Martha Martin is a beautiful name," he said. "Do you know what my name is?"

"Yes sir. It's Mr. Theodore Kelvin Blair."

"Do you know the nicknames for *Theodore*?"

"Yes sir. *Ted* and *Teddy*."

"I want you to call me *Teddy*, Martha."

The little girl sent a frightened glance at her mother. Mrs. Martin smiled comfortingly. Martha's soft red mouth opened and remained open.

"Try it, Martha," Blair said gently. "As a favor."

"You mean, you want me to call you—"

"*Teddy*," he said.

"*Teddy*, sir?"

"Never mind the *sir*. Just *Teddy*."

Martha glanced again at her mother. She looked back hopelessly at Theodore K. Blair.

"*Teddy*?" she wailed.

"That's it. Thank you, Martha. That will be all. Mrs.

Martin, I want to give Martha something for being so kind to me. You and Martha select it. A nice watch, or a little necklace."

"Thank you, Mr. Blair."

There was no satisfaction in Theodore K. Blair's expression. He knew that he had made a fool of himself in the eyes of an eleven-year-old child.

CHAPTER IV

THE sidewalk and street were glistening from the rain. The air was sweet with the smells of freshly washed asphalt, and of city trees, rinsed free of dust, breathing again.

"Let's go somewhere and mull this over," Ronkton said. "Where shall we eat?"

Senator Pitcairn suggested the City Club. It was cool and quiet there.

"Can we get beer there? Real beer?"

"No, Harvey."

Ronkton grunted.

"Then let's hunt up some nice, law-abiding speak-easy."

The four men got into Senator Pitcairn's limousine.

"A speak-easy, Henry," the Senator said to his chauffeur, "where we can get some good beer."

"Yes, Senator."

"I know we're licked," Ronkton grumbled, "but I hate to admit it. I hate to admit we can't put that man in the White House. He is the only man in the Union who belongs there. His brains would save the country and the party. There's nothing I wouldn't do to put him in. But the voters won't get behind a capitalistic iceberg..."

The rogue was eating spaghetti and starting his second bottle of champagne when Tony admitted Jimmy Carlyle. Jimmy Carlyle looked like a stockbroker or a successful real-estate agent. He was short and plump and jolly-looking. His round face was ruddy. His eyes were brown and benign. His dinner-clothes looked as though they had been cut by a high-priced tailor.

The rogue saw him and called, "Hi, there, Jimmy!" The persistence of the man named Salter had given him a temporary scare, but he thrived on scares. Scares exhilarated him.

Jimmy Carlyle shook hands with him and sat down, beaming. He took the champagne bottle out of the ice-bucket and read the label. Putting it back, he took out a leather cigar-case and removed a cigar plated with gold foil. He peeled off the foil, bit off the end of the cigar and lighted it.

"You seem to be celebrating," he said. His eyes had lost their benignity.

"I almost got arrested," the rogue told him. "I always make it a point to celebrate when I escape arrest."

Jimmy Carlyle's face ceased being round. It became square. All its lines were vertical. It was as if he had put on a mask. The mask might have been called "Menace."

"What happened?"

"Don't get sore, Jimmy. I needed some money. How did I know I could count on you? How did I know you wouldn't let me down the way you have before?"

"What did you do?"

"Bet a couple of fellows I could bend a dime with my fingers."

A dent appeared between Carlyle's intent eyes.

"Where did this happen?"

"A place called Green Plains. I took a bus from Springfield to Green Plains. My ticket was to Green Plains. I had to buy a ticket on another bus there to get here.

But there was a girl on the bus who had a pair of dice, and she took five dollars away from me. It was worth five dollars to see that baby manipulate those bones! But that left me broke in Green Plains. All I had was a couple of bent dimes. I always carry a couple of bent dimes. I bent these in a Springfield garage. But I must have been careless. I usually cover the jaws of the pincers with cloth so the dimes won't be scratched. Anyhow, I dropped into the Green Plains tavern."

Carlyle's lips were growing thinner and thinner.

"So you took the chance of messing up all my plans, just to put over a fast one on a couple of suckers. You couldn't have phoned me, could you? You couldn't have reversed the charges and asked me to drive out and pick you up, could you? Oh, no. You had to expose yourself to arrest. You had to make a damned fool of yourself. How did you almost get pinched?"

Varney saw how angry Carlyle was, and began to laugh.

"Why don't you let me tell the story? It's a good story. I got their money and borrowed a car and drove here."

"You mean, you stole a car."

"I almost got away with it. But one of the suckers, a man named Salter, was suspicious. He found pincer-marks on the dime. I had to jump through a window and grab a car. I

took one that looked fast. But it wasn't fast. It had an aluminum hood. Never be misled by appearances, Jimmy. Shining eyes can hide a heart black with murder."

"You mean," Carlyle said, "you almost got pinched in here?"

"It was a close call. I stopped along the road, shaved my eyebrows, wiped off my tan and changed to these clothes. The suckers and some cops followed me here. A flatfoot saved the day by insisting I was Theodore K. Blair. So I'm celebrating."

Carlyle glowered at him. He said softly: "You're trying to throw a scare into me. You're not going to hold me up, Varney. Get that straight."

"Jimmy, I am the spirit of enthusiastic coöperation."

He lifted a forkload of spaghetti into his mouth and washed it down with champagne. There was something vaguely wolfish about him when he ate.

"Cool off, Jimmy," he said. "Tell me how things stand."

Carlyle puffed angrily at his cigar. "Everything has been running in oil until now. I knew there'd be trouble

when you showed up. You'd rather play a pair of suckers and steal a car than put your mind to a deal that would make you independent. You're a tinhorn, Pete Varney. You're dangerous. Why don't you take life more seriously?"

"The answer to that," Varney answered, "is, why do you take life so seriously?"

Carlyle called Tony to the table. "Tony," he said darkly, "do you know who this gentleman is?"

"His name is Mr. Varney," Tony said.

"That isn't his real name. That's the name he goes under when he's out having a good time. This gentleman, Tony, is Mr. Theodore K. Blair. He is the chairman of the board of the Universal Corporation. Do you get that?"

"Sure, Mr. Carlyle."

"Don't forget it. And don't let anyone annoy him."

"I'm a man of importance," the rogue said.

"I knew it all the time," Tony said, and went away to answer the doorbell.

Carlyle put his elbows on the table and bent forward. His eyes became steady gleams in whirls of pink flesh.

"I have a suite of offices in the Fairmont Building," he said. "There's to be a meeting at ten tomorrow morning. Some of the biggest shots in Steel City will be there. I notified them all you would give them fifteen

minutes at ten-thirty. I haven't been able to get another look at Blair, but your resemblance to him is absolutely remarkable. I'm sure none of these men you'll talk to tomorrow has ever talked to Blair. No one sees him. He keeps himself shut up in his house most of the time. He doesn't go out unless it's vitally important. I've told these men that you—Blair—have had the idea of forming an investment company for months. I've warned them of the necessity of secrecy. They must not even call you at your house, because telephones are dangerous. I've thought of everything."

The men would, he said, bring their check-books in the morning.

"All you have to do is talk to them coldly and crisply for fifteen minutes. As a matter of fact, all they have to do is see your face. It's a push-over."

The rogue emptied his wineglass.

"What do I say in my speech?"

"I've got it all written out, up at my hotel. It won't be hard to learn. You simply tell them that, with the stock-market still so low, the time is ripe for an invest-



Blair was trying to find some germ of hope, but there was none to find.

ment company. You say that your inside knowledge of stock-values makes the success of such a company a certainty. They know that, anyway. But it will make them greedier. They'll want to climb aboard for all they're worth. You don't have to be specific. The more mysterious and remote you are, the more you'll be in character."

"Who are the checks made payable to?"

"The Universal Securities Company. I picked that because it sounds like his own company. I've opened a checking account in that name. All you have to do is make that little speech. I'll attend to all the dirty work. There's no danger of your being detected, if you play the part carefully. No one ever sees Blair. He's absolutely inaccessible, except to his company's highest executives. Remember that. He's cold and remote. He seldom smiles. He plays poker with his face every minute."

"Don't forget, Jimmy, I've impersonated him before."

"But not so close to home, and not for stakes like these. Here they know him for nothing but a thinking machine. That's the part you play tomorrow—a thinking machine."

"It's all right with me, as long as I play the part of an adding machine too. How much do I get?"

"Twenty-five thousand."

"How much do you get?"

"I don't know. It all depends. Aren't you satisfied with twenty-five thousand? That's more money than you've ever had in your life. It seems to me, twenty-five thousand for fifteen minutes' work is fairly generous. Look at the risks I take! Look at the expenses I'm under! Don't forget, I'm in danger every minute."

"All right," the rogue said. "If I forget, you remind me, will you? How about a drink? Aren't you going to eat anything?"

He was wondering how he could pry more than twenty-five thousand out of Jimmy Carlyle. He could at least wait until the last minute and demand fifty thousand. But there might be better ways. He might get it all.

"We ought to be getting out of here," Carlyle said.

"I've got to hide you overnight."

"Why didn't you have me meet you at your hotel?"

"Too risky. No one ever comes in here. I've taken a furnished room for you near the hotel."

"I thought you had something important on for tonight. I thought we had to meet some of our victims."

"It was called off at the last minute. I had a conference arranged with John Bigelow, of Bigelow and Paine, the department-store people. But Bigelow called it off—said he'd come with the rest of the bunch in the morning."

"Doesn't that sound suspicious?"

"No. Bigelow scarcely knows Blair to speak to."

"Well, have a drink, Jimmy. I'm going to celebrate that twenty-five thousand."

"You're going to quit drinking right now. You can't bring a hang-over into that office. Blair is a teetotaler."

FOUR men passed the table, trailing Tony to a table against the wall on the other side of the room. Carlyle looked at them idly, as they sat down; then his head came up sharply, his eyes opened wide and his nostrils dilated. He whistled softly.

"Look!" he said excitedly. "It's the Big Four!"

Peter Varney looked.

"Who?"

"Those four men who just sat down! The black-haired, yellow-faced one in the brown suit—that's Ronkton!"

"Not Harvey Ronkton!"

"Yes. The bald little fellow with the white mustache

next to him is Senator Pitcairn. The big red-faced one is Niles De Kay, the political boss of the Middle West. The other one must be Senator Melrose. It is Melrose! What are they doing here? What are they doing in Steel City?"

Carlyle was pale with excitement.

"We've got to get out of here. If they spot you, there's going to be trouble. Pitcairn and Blair are old friends. We've got to get out of here quick!"

"Easy!" the rogue said. "We can handle this. Leave it to me."

"You'll spoil everything!"

"I want to meet Ronkton. My policy is to walk with kings and yet retain the common touch."

"You're drunk!"

"I intend to meet the Big Four."

"You're coming with me!"

"Jimmy, you don't understand me. The only kick I get in life is dangerous situations. And this will be a test. If I can convince them that I am Blair, our job tomorrow will be easy."

"If you don't come now, the job is off."

"Twenty-five thousand," Varney said, "is chicken-feed compared to what I can take away right here. I'm going to play my dime trick on the Big Four."

"You sap! Blair doesn't drink!"

"Blair is having a whimsical moment. I have one bent dime left."

"Put that bottle down!"

"I DON'T know what these other gentlemen want," Harvey Ronkton said to Tony, "but what I want is beer. I want beer before I have anything to eat. Will any of you join me?"

"I guess we'll all have beer," Senator Pitcairn said.

"Have you got it in seidels?" Ronkton asked. And when Tony affirmed that he had it in seidels, Ronkton said: "Then bring us four seidels. And may heaven help you if it's needed."

"It isn't needed," Tony said. "It's genuine beer."

When Tony had gone, Ronkton launched forth upon a dissertation on beer-drinking. Most people, he said, didn't know how to drink beer. There was only one proper way to drink beer. You drank it steadily until your stomach became a cold, fairly solid mass. An expert beer-drinker drank beer only to achieve this pleasing sensation. The effects of wooziness, or hilarity, were purely incidental.

He had progressed thus far when the expression on Niles De Kay's big red face halted him. The eyes of the boss of the Middle West seemed to be protruding. His mouth had fallen open in the grimace of a man who is suddenly finding it hard to breathe.

"What," De Kay asked, in a hoarse whisper, "is he doing here? And how did he get here so soon? He's tight!"

Ronkton and the other two men were now looking too, with varied expressions of astonishment. They watched an amazing pantomime. They saw Theodore K. Blair, obviously somewhat the worse for wear, struggling with his dinner companion over a green bottle. His dinner companion held the bottle firmly by two hands at the base. Theodore K. Blair had the upper half of the champagne bottle in his hands and was doing his best to wrench it from the other.

Theodore K. Blair stood up and pulled. The bottle came free in his hands. A quantity of fizzling liquid spurted out onto his immaculate shirt-bosom. Laughing, he placed the bottle to his mouth and drank.

His dinner companion had risen too. Flushed from his recent unsuccessful exertions, he stared in apparent panic

at the four amazed politicians. Then, clamping his lips together, he swung about and strode out of the room.

Harvey Ronkton arose as the man with the champagne bottle emptied it of its dregs. He walked across the room with glinting eyes and a twisted smile.

"This," he said, "is something new."

The rogue replaced the bottle on the table, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and laughed. He looked drunk, but he wasn't.

"You ought to try," he said, "drinking whisky right out of the bunghole."

Ronkton searched the flushed face, the merry eyes.

"It didn't take you long to get this way," he said.

"It crept up on me," the rogue explained. "It crept up on me—and pounced!" He laughed and said: "Sit down and have a drink, Ronkton."

"I hardly know you this way," Ronkton said. "You're an entirely changed man."

"I slip it on and off," the rogue said. "It's a trick that took me years to learn."

"It's amazing."

"It's a gift, Ronkton. Sit down and have a drink."

Ronkton did not sit down. He was too astonished to move. How had Blair got so drunk in such a short time? He had been cold sober when they left his house not twenty-five minutes before!

"You'd better," he said, "join us. It would look better if you were with us."

"By all means!" the rogue said. "I want to buy your friends a drink."

Niles De Kay stood up as they came over, moved his chair and pulled over another one from the adjoining table. But the rogue did not sit down at once.

"The drinks are on me, gentlemen," he said. He threw one arm affectionately around Ronkton's shoulder. "Are you surprised to find me here?"

"Can you tie it?" Senator Melrose inquired of Senator Pitcairn. "Can you believe your own eyes? How did he do it in this space of time?"

SENATOR PITCAIRN did not answer; he could not answer. Of the four men, he alone knew Blair's habits intimately. In a friendship extending over a long period, he had never known Blair to take a drink of anything stronger than vichy. He could only stare at this boisterous stranger in bewilderment.

"I thought," Melrose whispered to him, "you said he never touched a drop."

"He never did. I simply don't understand it."

"Have any of you gentlemen a dime?" Theodore K. Blair asked. "I'd like to show you something. Something good. All we need is a plain, everyday American dime. I want to show you how that dime can be bent with the fingers and thumb of one hand."

"Sit down," Ronkton said gently. Tony had returned with a tray on which stood four foaming seidels of beer.

"I would like to bet any of you gentlemen any sum you name that I can bend a dime with the fingers and thumb of one hand. Who has a dime? What's the matter? Do you doubt my word? Will you bet that I can't bend a dime with the fingers and thumb of one hand?"

"Do you know," Ronkton asked of Tony, "who this gentleman is?"

"Yes, sir! That's Theodore K. Blair."

"Does he come here often?"

"No sir. This is his first time. I wish he'd come often. A night like this is a big help."

"Let's all sit down," Ronkton said.

"But I want to convince you gentlemen that I can bend a dime with the fingers and thumb—"

"Let's bend the dime later." Ronkton gently forced the dime-bender into the extra chair.

"I want to buy you all a drink."

Niles De Kay and the two Senators looked at Harvey Ronkton. He said quietly: "Blair, I thought you said you were having dinner tonight at the Hamiltons."

THE rogue gave him a comical smile. "I must have changed my mind."

"How did you get here in such a hurry?"

"I swim every inch of the way."

"He swim," Senator Melrose marveled, "every inch of the way."

But Ronkton had ceased finding anything funny in the situation. He knew that men sometimes get drunk for reasons.

"What happened?" he asked. "Did Felicia turn you down again?"

"Felicia? Certainly not!"

"You mean, she accepted you?"

"That's just what I mean. That's why I'm celebrating."

"How did you do it?"

"Gentlemen," the rogue asked, "must we go into these intimate details?"

"Blair," Ronkton said, "I congratulate you. I am delighted. Everything is simplified now. I can understand the change in you now. You're human all of a sudden. We can go ahead with our plans."

"Why not?" the rogue said. "But before we go ahead with our plans, let's see if we can bend a dime. I mean, an ordinary American dime. I say that I can bend a dime with the fingers and thumb of one hand. Who has a dime? I'm betting each of you twenty-five thousand dollars that I can bend a dime and that you can't."

Senator Melrose took out some change and selected a dime. He tried to bend it. His face grew red. He laughed.

"It's impossible," he said. "Nobody can bend a dime with his fingers."

"Will you bet twenty-five thousand?"

"I certainly will!"

"How about you, Ronkton?"

Ronkton picked up the dime and tried to bend it. His face grew red. He grimaced.

"I'll be you fifty thousand you can't bend it."

"How about you, Pitcairn?"

"I think," the Senator said, "we'd better go to your house."

"I haven't a home," the rogue said. "My bed is a green field. My canopy is the starry sky. Have you your check-books with you, gentlemen?"

How he would cash their checks was a problem he would meet when the time came.

Senator Pitcairn said: "I don't understand you, Blair."

"That's just the trouble. Nobody understands me. I'm the most misunderstood man in the world. That's why we'll make our checks payable to cash."

The Senator's basflement had given way to a brand-new species of amazement.

"You aren't Theodore Blair," he said.

"What?" Ronkton said, with a laugh.

"This man is not Theodore Blair."

The rogue got up. He would have liked to strangle Senator Pitcairn. He had been within inches of acquiring a hundred thousand dollars or more.

"You're crazy," Ronkton said.

"His eyebrows are shaved," the Senator declared.

"This man is not Theodore Blair."

The rogue took the matter out of their hands. He shouted for Tony. When Tony came trotting up, he

The men looking on saw Theodore K. Blair struggling with his dinner companion over a green bottle. Blair was doing his best to wrest it from the other.



"Tony, these gentlemen say I'm not who I am. Tell them who I am. Who am I?"

Tony smiled. "Mr. Theodore K. Blair."

"There! Is there any doubt about it?"

"How long has Mr. Blair been in here?" Senator Pitcairn asked.

"At least a couple of hours," Tony said.

"Thank you, Tony," Ronkton said. "We just wanted to make sure."

That was all Ronkton had to say for some time. He sat back and let the others ask the questions.

The men they had mistaken for Theodore K. Blair became wittily stubborn. He was Theodore K. Blair. He had proved it. Let's all have a drink and forget about it. He was wondering if he might clown his way out of this. His charm, his geniality, his humor had saved him from many tight corners.

"Do you live in Steel City?"

"No."

"How long have you been here?"

"Long enough to—"

"What's your real name?"

"Theodore K. Blair."

Ronkton leaned back in his chair and looked at the rogue speculatively and chewed his cigar. His eyes were

“ny. His large, rubbery mouth worked constantly.

Senator Pitcairn finally lost his temper. "If you don't want to be arrested, you'd better come clean."

"Senator, you can't have me arrested merely because I look like somebody else. That's no criminal offense; it's the other fellow's good fortune."

"You'd better think faster. You can be arrested for impersonating another man."

The rogue laughed. "I can see I'm no match for four mental giants. My name is Peter Varney."

"Where do you live?"

"I'm a traveling-man."

"What concern do you travel for?"

"My own concern."

"What's your occupation?"

"Not gathering moss, gentlemen—not gathering moss."

"What are you doing in Steel City?"

"I heard it was a health resort."

"Gentlemen, this," said Niles De Kay, "is getting us nowhere."

"What difference does it make," the rogue asked, "who I am, what I am, what I do, or

where I live? Aren't we all birds of passage? Do I care where you build your nest or why? Let's all have a drink. There's truth in wine. Did it ever occur to you that the history of America began with corn—and ended with corn liquor?"

Ronkton smiled dreamily. Senator Pitcairn glared. Senator Melrose, who took even his slightest cues from Ronkton, smiled. Niles De Kay, with his big red face, looked childishly interested—in fact, fascinated.

Senator Pitcairn continued the inquisition.

"Whom were you dining with, Mr. Varney?"

"A friend—just a friend."

"What is his name?"

"I forgot."

"Carlyle," Tony, who had been listening in, supplied.

"Jimmy Carlyle."

"Beat it, Tony," said Varney.

"Yes, Mr. Blair."

"What," Senator Pitcairn asked, "does Jimmy Carlyle do for a living?"

"I think he trains seals."

"You think he trains seals!" Senator Melrose said.

"What," Ronkton, still vague of eye, asked, "were you two planning to pull off?"

The rogue looked at him with suddenly squared lips. His eyes seemed to bend flat. He realized that he had been a fool to think he could play with men as dangerous as these.

"You four have a hell of a lot of nerve putting me on the fire," he said angrily. "Because you run the Government, doesn't stack up anywhere with me. When did the law give you the right to tell me who to have dinner with? Besides, what of it? Who am I to you?"

"You interest us strangely," Ronkton said.

"You can snap out of it. I'm going."

"You're going to be pinched, Varney, if you do. Senator Pitcairn, there's a telephone out in the hall. Will you send word out that we want this Jimmy Carlyle brought in. You saw enough of him to give a description?"

Senator Pitcairn got up and went into the hall. Ronkton continued to gaze dreamily, speculatively, without rancor, at the rogue. Varney had lost some of his high color. He licked his lips. He picked up a seidel and drank some beer. He was sweating. His eyes gave him away.

Ronkton smiled. "Scared, Varney?"

"What are you going to do to me?"

"Introduce you to Theodore K. Blair."

The rogue discarded an impulse to break for liberty. What chance had he in the hands of men so powerful that they could dictate where stars of destiny were to twinkle in the sky?

CHAPTER V

THEODORE K. BLAIR gravely consulted his image in a mirror as he handed his stick, his gloves and his hat to the Hamiltons' butler. He wished his face had a little more color. It looked gray and old. He felt tired. Even his amazingly active brain was tired—exhausted, in fact, by the strain put upon it by Harvey Ronkton.

"I'd better have a fresh gardenia."

"Yes, Mr. Blair."

The fresh gardenia came as he waited in the drawing-room, looking up at an oil portrait of Felicia by Sargent, when she was about nine. A perky little girl with riotous brown hair, crisp pink lips, high coloring, legs as graceless as matchsticks. Sargent had included a Russian wolfhound, with hair so real you could stroke it.

Theodore Blair recalled that he never stroked dogs, kissed babies or gave apples to horses. He disliked wolfhounds.

The butler replaced the slightly wilted gardenia with the fresh one.

"Miss Hamilton is late, Mr. Blair. She went to the airport at four and left word that she might be late. She is doing some special kind of flying."

"Where are Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton?"

"They are dining with the Middletons, sir."

"Is Miss Hamilton expecting anyone else?"

"No one but you, Mr. Blair."

The butler withdrew. Left alone with the portrait of the spindly-legged little girl with whom, grown to womanhood, he had fallen so hopelessly in love, Theodore Blair tried to make something of the information he had just received. His hopeful fancy told him Felicia had suddenly softened toward him; had sent her father and mother away for dinner and the evening, so that she could be alone with him. Her popularity made dinner alone with Felicia a rare and distinguished event. He couldn't recall when they'd ever had dinner alone before. It was an auspicious omen. She was at the point of surrender!

Theodore Blair looked around for another mirror. Finding one, he preened himself. The excitement of his fancies had put color into his face, a sparkle into his eyes.

A girl laughed. "Hi, T. K.! Adoring yourself?"

He saw her in the mirror before he turned around, a slim girl in white. Her dark hair was disarrayed. Her cheeks were pink. Her eyes were glowing. There was a black smudge on her nose.

She was standing with her hands on her hips. Her hands were black with grease. She wore white coveralls. They were streaked and spotted with grease up to the el-

bows. Her shoes and the legs of the coveralls were caked with mud.

"I've had more damned excitement," she said. "I had a forced landing in a cornfield and I'd hardly taken off out of there when the engine conked again, and I came down in a marsh. I had to walk through a mile of marsh to the nearest farmhouse. If they get that crate out of there, they're good."

Even in her disarray, Felicia was beautiful. She was always beautiful. Her high coloring, her lovely crisp mouth, the sculpturing of her head, took care of that.

"I borrowed the farmer's flivver and hurried home. Shall we wait a couple of hours while I bathe and change, or shall we eat the way I am?"

"Let's eat the way you are."

"Okay, T. K."

A zipper ran down the front of the coveralls. Felicia zipped: Blair was breathlessly interested. The coveralls fell to the floor. Felicia now wore figured blue lounging pajamas, very tight at the waist and very full in the legs.

"Let me have your handkerchief, Theodore."

She went to the mirror and wiped the smudge from her nose with his handkerchief.

"You look tired," she said. "While I'm washing my hands, you might park the world in the corner and tell Hudson we're ready for dinner. Tell him to bring me a dry Martini in the dining-room. You won't have one, of course. You really ought to have one, T. K. Why don't you take lessons in loosening up?"

"Why don't you take the job of teaching me?"

"I'll give you a postgraduate course if you'll get somebody to give you the kindergarten work."

Blair laughed, but he really felt miserable. The sensitiveness of the unwanted lover made of all this so many barbs which raked his soul. Felicia was always joking about his unbendingness. She had once said that marrying him would be like sleeping between starched sheets.

Why couldn't he unbend? Why couldn't he laugh when he made love to her? Other men did. His tendency was to grow more and more grim. . . .

He sent out a feeler.

"I heard a man say today that there isn't a girl in the United States who wouldn't jump at the chance to marry a man who was slated to be the next President."

FELICIA said that was a dandy hypothetical question. It reminded her of the foxy captain of a transatlantic liner who had a long list of stock questions.

"He liked his food and he hated to talk to silly women. So he dropped these questions, one after another, every meal-time, all the way across. The people at his table were so busy fighting over the questions that he was left alone to eat. Who did you say the man was?"

"Harvey Ronkton."

She looked at him across the candle flames.

"What's Ronkton doing in town?"

"Visiting Senator Pitcairn." Blair had decided to wait until after dinner to tell her his news.

"I get chills," he said, "every time I hear you're going flying. I'd like to punch the man who invented airplanes."

"That used to be Dad's attitude, but he got over it."

"You'll have to give it up when you get married."

"I'll marry into the air mail."

"Would you marry me if I let you keep on flying?"

"I wouldn't marry anybody if I had to drive bargains."

"Then that's settled," he said. "You can fly to Mars, provided you fly right back."

"Nope. Every time I went up, I'd think of you, Theodore, having chills."

"Would it be possible," he asked, "to call me Ted or Teddy?"

She looked at him quizzically over the candle-flames.

"I'd be afraid the heavens would fall, the earth rise up and swallow me. It would be worse than calling God 'Goddie,'"

They had coffee on a stone bench in the garden. The bench faced a fountain whose falling spray was converted by the summer moon into a curtain of dripping diamonds. Behind them some flowering vine, the name of which Blair did not know, sent forth a persuasive fragrance.

"Why is Ronkton is town?" Felicia asked again.

HOW could he phrase it? He didn't want it to sound falsely dramatic, or epochal. Finally he said:

"He wanted me to run for the Presidency."

Felicia cried: "How marvelous!"

"I said 'wanted.' You see, Felicia, I'm hopeless Presidential timber. I'm too cold. I'm too aloof. I'm nothing but a thinking machine."

"That's rot. You'd make a wonderful President. Dad said so only a couple of days ago. He said you'd make a great President. He said you were the one man in America with the brains to put the country on its feet. I'm delighted, T. K."

"You don't understand. I don't get the chance. I'm not the kind of man the people would vote for. I haven't any popular appeal. I'm too remote, too aloof, too cold. And I'd lose the woman vote because women think a bachelor of thirty-seven is either an old maid or an old roué."

"I'll campaign for you, darling, and tell the women the truth."

He asked her in a dry voice what the truth was.

"Why! That you're a grand, upstanding person with morals as pure as the driven snow, and that you're neither an old maid nor an old roué."

"Ronkton says there's only one slim chance. A romance, he says, might win the hearts of the voters."

"Then it's terribly simple, T. K. All you have to do is let this be known to all the nice, eligible girls. What an opportunity for all the nice, eligible girls!"

"The trouble is," Blair said, "I don't want to take a troupe of nice, eligible girls to the White House. Even the President is allowed only one by law. And the trouble with me is, I'm not interested in any girl but you."

"And I don't want to go to the White House, T. K. The very thought of it is appalling. Having to be decorous with bewhiskered old ambassadors and cabinet ministers! Spending all my time worrying about where so-and-so is to be seated at the banquet! Smirking benevolently at the news-reel cameras. Laying cornerstones when it's a hundred in the shade. What could be more hideous?"

"Felicia, I'm going to give you the situation as Ronkton sees it."

"Ronkton is an old fox!"

"But he's looking for the right man."

"Well, he's found him. You're the only man who can go into the White House and save the country from utter perdition."

"That makes it my patriotic duty, doesn't it?"

"It does, darling, if you feel you have a patriotic duty. Why should anyone have a feeling of patriotic duty? Maybe patriotism is a great mistake. I have a sneaking suspicion the world would be better off without patriots. Where there are patriots, there are bound to be boundary-lines. And where there are boundary-lines, there are bound to be soldiers. And where there are soldiers—"

"Until the world reaches the ideal state where boundary-lines can be done away with," Blair began, "patriotism—"

"You mean chauvinism."

"No. I mean patriotism, which is the willingness to help your country out of a jam. If America gets on her feet, the rest of the world will certainly be affected. Wars may be averted. So let's leave patriotism out of it. Let's look at it from the world's viewpoint. I see it as my duty to take the Presidency if I can get it. Can't you see it as your duty—"

"I haven't a sense of duty. Woodrow Wilson was an idealist, too. See how popular he is with posterity!"

"I'm not an idealist. I'm a practical business-man. The problem facing America and the rest of the world is reorganization."

"And you're a dandy organizer."

"And I can get the job if you will back me up."

"You mean marry you."

"The marriage can be on any terms you say."

"I don't want that kind of marriage, T. K. Why should I make the sacrifice—throw my life away?"

"I'm willing to make the sacrifice."

"Why should my life be a sacrifice to anything? Life isn't any too happy as it is without deliberately going after grief. Didn't you say that any nice, eligible girl would do? There are thousands of girls who would leap at the chance to be the first lady of the land—God help her! You say yourself that all you need is the popular appeal of a romance. Why should I be the victim? What did I ever do to you?"

"Do you think I could deliberately marry any girl who happened to be eligible?"

"Certainly—if you're anxious enough to save the world from perdition! You're not sacrificing yourself, but you're willing to sacrifice me. Why should I be tossed to the lions when any girl will do?"

"That isn't the point. I'd rather let the country go to the devil than stoop to such a thing."

"Then we agree perfectly."

"Yes," he said dryly; "we agree perfectly. I love you, and you loathe me."

"That isn't so, darling. I admire and respect you more than any man alive. But I'm not in love with you. I'll do anything under the sun to help you, but I won't marry you, and I won't let you intimate that there is a budding romance. I have too much respect for romance to let men like Harvey Ronkton drag it in the mud. You wouldn't suggest such a thing if he hadn't put it in your mind. The truth is, you're simply burning up to be the next President. All this talk of patriotism and saving the world is camouflage. Your egotism is crying aloud for the White House."

"That isn't fair, Felicia!"

"And you can't see why I should object to being chained to your chariot."

"I think I'd better go home," Blair said.

"I think so too. Good night, darling."

IN his limousine, with the apartment buildings and the mansions of Parkside Drive slipping past—piles of cold masonry in the moonlight—Blair tried to pull himself together. It had been the most distressing emotional experience he had ever undergone; for he had let himself go—come out and said those things he had always been inhibiting.

He was the unhappiest man in the world. Within a space of hours he had been denied his two dearest ambitions. He fell into a bitter speculation on what he was striving for. What was he living for? To what purpose had he achieved the mastery of brain and emotions?

Why had he devoted his life to building up a machine whose chief function was to crush him? The irony of his success suddenly infuriated him.

CHAPTER VI

BLAIR'S butler, as the door closed, murmured that Mr. Ronkton, Mr. De Kay and Senators Pitcairn and Melrose were waiting in the library.

"And a fifth gentleman who didn't give his name."

"A fifth gentleman?"

"Yes sir, a fifth gentleman—with a handkerchief covering the lower half of his face."

Bitter with frustration, Blair savagely asked him what in hell he was trying to say.

"Just that, sir. A fifth gentleman came with them with a white handkerchief over most of his face. I could only see his eyes. For a moment I thought it was you, Mr. Blair. I thought it was some practical joke. Mr. Ronkton said nothing. They went into the library and shut the door. They said no one but you was to be admitted."

"Very well."

Wearily Blair gave him his things.

"Mr. John Bigelow, of the Bigelow and Paine department-store, telephoned shortly after you left, sir, to inquire about a Universal Securities Company."

"I don't know anything about it."

"Mr. Bigelow said you were going to address the stockholders tomorrow at ten-thirty."

"There must be some mistake."

"Yes sir; there must be. But he said that something had happened to arouse his suspicions that—that the company was not quite what it claimed to be. He wanted to get in touch with you. He thought some unscrupulous people might be using your name. He wanted to make sure that everything was all right."

"Oh, the devil with it!" Blair said, and went to the library.

The door was locked. He knocked. A muffled voice inquired who it was.

Blair cried irritably: "Why the mystery?"

The door opened. Blair went in. Only the light on his desk was burning. He started for the switch when Ronkton's thin voice said: "Wait, Blair."

"What's going on here?"

Melrose, Pitcairn and De Kay were grouped behind his desk in a tableau portraying intense curiosity. Ronkton was at the wall switch.

"Put those lights on."

The side-lights, then the ceiling lights went on.

Through a haze of angry resentment Blair stared at a man standing in the center of the rug who might have been himself; who was indeed himself, except that the stranger was the thing which Blair was not, and the thing he longed, in the bitterest hour of his life, to be: a warm, magnetic personality.

He had taken a step backward and sharply caught his breath. Still in the limbo of his suffering ego, he saw his image, as a woman who lacks attractiveness sees herself in a rosily lighted mirror, creating out of imagination an unattainable charm.

Amazement was liberating a salty chemical, a galvanic discharge, on his tongue. Anger came freshly when he realized how brutally this had been staged: he was being deliberately insulted in his own house. Insult added to injury. It was too much. Throwing this reminder in his face was the last straw.

THE stranger laughed softly. And even that was a spiritual taunt: rich and charming and warm.

"Look hard, Mr. Blair," the rogue said. "I am the man who can make you what you want to be."

"Your name is Varney," Blair said savagely. "You've impersonated me in the West. You're at it again in Steel City."

"That may be true, Mr. Blair, but it isn't the point. Here, in the flesh, is the man who can place you on the highest pinnacles. With my magnetism welded to your thinking ability, we can whip the world. These four men know it. Why do you suppose they brought me here?"

Blair said angrily: "Ronkton, this is an insult."

"This fellow," Ronkton answered, "has taken matters into his own hands. We've told him nothing. But he has put his finger on the truth."

"What truth?" Blair furiously demanded. "I don't need a crook, a sharpshooter, to put me anywhere."

"You aren't using that famous brain," the rogue said. "It's your ego. You won't admit that I am the man you need to make you great."

Self-control deserted Blair. He knew that this genial, magnetic stranger was telling the truth. But he had heard too much truth about himself today. Ego was cornered now.

"I don't need a cheap crook to put me anywhere. Who are you? A rascal who bears a physical resemblance to me! You think you're going to capitalize that. You're mistaken. You won't impersonate me again, Mr. Varney. You're going to jail."

AND Blair started for the telephone. But Ronkton stood in his way.

"Don't throw away this chance, Blair. Cool off. This man is right. Forget his arrogance. Remember your patriotic duty. What he says is true."

"Great God!" Blair marveled. "You say this rascal is the man I need to—what? Supplement my personality? I need this rogue—this cheap crook!"

"United we stand; divided we fall," the rogue said amiably. "Your brains—my magnetism. Your power—my personality. You furnish half the man; I furnish the other half. Fifty-fifty."

"Ronkton!" Blair murmured.

"It's true, Blair."

"Fifty-fifty!" Blair repeated harshly. "You put this rascal on a plane with me—me! What has he ever done? Compare us! Has he whipped into shape the greatest corporation in America? Has he founded hospitals, endowed schools? Has he enabled a million workmen to eat and pay bills in the hardest times the country has ever known? Has he made his name stand for decency, honor, integrity? What power has he except what he reflects from me? That's the question! What power has he? My power could make him great. It has made other men great. And you tell me that this accident, this freak of nature, is on a plane with me?"

"Was the *Pied Piper* a corporation president?" the rogue retorted. "Will the crowds follow you? What do you get from people? Admiration? Yes! Respect? Yes! Likings? You know the answer."

Fury ran through Blair in desolating waves. He enjoyed a novel experience: magnificent hatred. There is no hatred comparable with that born of dependence. For what the rogue said was undeniably true. The two of them, merged into a single personality, were a complete and mighty man, a perfect union of brains and charm, power and personal magnetism.

He read this in the eight excited eyes of the molders of a nation's destiny. The man of the hour was two men, provided the ruling oligarchy could buffalo one hundred and thirty million people.

Don Jimmy and the Flower

A memorable drama of the Southwestern border, by the man who wrote that classic short story "Rock of Ages."

By HAROLD CHANNING WIRE

IN Mother Riley's book, down at the border hotel, he signed himself "E. James." But Mexicans in the casino across the line called him at once Don Jimmy.

That scuffing limp of his irritated me from the first. You know what some sounds do—like fingernails scratching on a slate blackboard—they make your feathers stand on end.

It never occurred to me to wonder how he got that way. That's human. A man limps—who cares why?

There was another thing too. I had sent down to Mother Riley for a man cook. Back came this Don Jimmy and his Flower Girl. The Flower! Have you seen her? Well, she's ample. Her skin, though, is still the clearest Castilian; and you'll never forget her eyes.

I would a lot rather have been off up here at this old mine alone. That's what I had come West for, to hear the silence. But the job of mapping and surveying a new tunnel was taking every minute allowed me. I had to have help—a man who could get up the meals and perhaps hold the rod.

So here comes Don Jimmy. No, he didn't cook. The Flower did that. Then would she let him go into the tunnel, holding the rod for my line? No! Never into such a place! Never!

Night-times they regularly occupied a particular bench on the front veranda here. It was not far from my door. I couldn't help but see them sitting there all wrapped around each other. And their voices would go whispering on for hours. About what? Well—

In a week I went down to Arico, and to Mother Riley's.

"So you're wantin' a Chinaman, are you?" she flared at me, which was her way of showing affection. "Listen! You aint gettin' no Chink! And you aint going to send back Don Jimmy and the Flower. So there! Now what will you eat? If you say any more, I'm going to tell you something!"

Do you know Mother Riley—border mother down there at Arico? Well, you've missed a grand old girl!

Then you don't know Arico either, half American, half Mexican, with the barbed-wire border fence dividing the middle of the street. On the American side are three board buildings—Mother Riley's hotel, a store, the tele-

graph office. On the Mexican side is a row of adobes dedicated to the dude tourist who comes out from the East to see life, and pay for his look.

It is all arranged for him, this look at life. Having seen it through the bottom of a glass, through the spokes of a roulette-wheel, or in a pair of brown eyes with soft music, he can turn the corner of the other street that breaks midway along this one, parallel to the border, and he has the bird-cage and the China hop-joints. After seeing it all that way, he can make a finished job of himself on the Sonora desert beyond. It has been done.

Well, that's Arico, south of the line. North of it is Mother Riley.

Forty-two years she has owned her hotel there, and she could have been shot at sunrise any Christmas for the things she has known of revolutions below the fence and politics above it.

Just off the lobby is her "Ambassador's Room." It is broad in all directions; high, wide and handsome. Its windows have heavy plank shutters, Spanish-fashion, on the inside, that can be closed and are both sound- and sight-proof. Its door can be locked. It is a good place in which to discuss private business.

Only one thing: If you are ever lucky enough to be shown into it, take note of the fine old bedstead standing against the far wall. It must weigh half a ton—and perfectly immovable. Its footboard is high and its headboard higher; and behind the expanse of that great headboard is a small opening into Mother Riley's own room. Yes, she could be shot at sunrise any Christmas for things she has known. . . .

I spoke again about wanting a Chinaman cook at the mine.

Mother Riley gathered up the dishes of my meal, took them away, came back. We were alone in the dining-room with its one long table, the light dim behind shades drawn against the desert sun.

She sat down opposite. "Listen, you! You don't like Don Jimmy's limp. You don't like them sittin' there on each other talkin' and talkin', all hours of the night. How do you suppose he got that limp? What do you figure it is that holds them that way? You don't want



Illustrated by
Hubert Mathieu

to know, maybe. Well, you're going to, anyway!" And Mother Riley stood up and pulled one window-blind lower. It was a gesture shutting out the present. . . .

Plot and rumors of plot were thick below the line that spring of Don Jimmy's arrival in Arico. It was the year after the Padres had been driven from their mission churches, giving double cause for unrest.

How he came into town nobody knew, not even Mother Riley. That was unusual. A slight, brown-haired, solemn-eyed boy simply was sitting there at the little table in her lobby when she awoke from an afternoon siesta. He was sitting there dealing himself a hand of cards; well, not quite dealing—they seemed to flip from his fingers of their own accord. He gathered them again, shuffled them with a single movement of his thumbs.

"Are you running this flop-house?" he asked.

"Flop-house?" Mother flared. "Look here, young fellow, this aint no joint!"

"Pardon me." Jimmy inspected five cards; spread three kings and a pair of aces on the table-top. Then he looked up, smiling, and Mother Riley fell into line.

That was the way with Don Jimmy. He had only to begin that slow smile of his, and a friend was made.

He signed for his room, a small single on the second floor; then as it was still in the lazy part of afternoon, they sat and talked.

"What's your business?" Mother Riley asked him, taking the inn-keeper's privilege.

"These." He exhibited the cards. "And this." With weight shifted onto his toes he stood up and clicked off a tap-dance there on the uncarpeted floor.

"Not bad for an amateur," Mother commented.

"Amateur?"

Jimmy sat down again. "I've been hoofing it all my life. Look me over! Today, all humility and poverty. Tomorrow—" He passed one hand in an arc through the air. "Lights! E. James on Broadway. Ziegfeld contract. Publicity-stuff like this: 'Border bum, found by the famous Flo in the barrooms of Arico, takes New York by the neck!'" And Jimmy smiled. It was not all hooey, that talk.

Mother Riley nodded. "Meanwhile?"

"Life must go on," said Jimmy. "And that takes round money. A troupe I was with went flat in Tia Juana. I've been dealing blackjack along the border towns—working East, you see. I'm good."

And he was. That night he struck Al Capper for a job. Al was an ex-pug who ran the American Club, across the line, paying fifty thousand every now and then for the privilege. That shows the proportions of his business. His club had two large rooms, one for the dance-floor, the other with the long bar and gambling-tables. There were some smaller rooms too, opening off the bar, where the games for big money were played.

"There's always a job here for a good man," Al told Jimmy.

"I work for a cut of ten cents on the dollar," Jimmy answered. "That's how good I am." Then he gave Al a level even look. "Do we win the pennies here, or take 'em?"

Al grinned. "Look around, fellow. You can answer that!"

From the side booth where they were sitting, Jimmy turned to scan the barroom. The dance-floor showed through a broad arch beyond.

The night was too young for the parties of American tourists; the bar was lined now with Arico's own. Mexicans stood there, some in uniform of the Federal army, some in the latest Tucson fashions, many in the brown rags of desert poems. But their faces were singularly alike, calculating God-knobs-what behind inscrutable black looks.

Shoulder to shoulder with these were three mottled-American cow-hands who lived south of the line instead of north of it for reasons best known to themselves. They made a show of carrying portable cannon in belt holsters.

"I see," said Jimmy. "I just wanted to know exactly what you might expect of me—because, you see, I'm not dealing bottom deck. I don't have to!"

"You wouldn't do it here more than three times," Al asserted. "I don't pay no funeral bills, and the Padre has left his church, so you wouldn't get no free service there."

Jimmy's glance went beyond the bar to the dance-floor. Not many couples were moving upon it; only a few of the house girls, automatic and glass-eyed, in the arms of men who had to go home early.

The piece was a waltz, being danced as if it were a struggle in a whirlpool, until one figure drifted past the arch.

Jimmy's wandering gaze stopped short. Slowly he searched in the wrong pocket for a cigarette.

Al nodded, following his eye. "The Flower," he said; then added proudly: "Costs me a lot of money to keep that girl!"

Jimmy snapped his head around. "What do you mean, keep her?"

"Oh, hell," Al laughed, "keep her here in the Club! She's got some cracked idea about the church—draws a fat pay, and God knows what she does with it. But watch her."

Jimmy did. More than once in his deal that night he lost to a mere eighteen, for his eyes and his thoughts were not wholly on the game.

And why should they be? What eyes did not follow the lovely figure of the Flower, slender and golden and vital, with rose-petal lips that smiled because they had to? She was too much a fresh young body there in that place—too much of blood and beauty, to be taken in a man's arms and crushed.

She was a house girl. Men could dance with her. They could buy drinks for her—paying for whisky, when the



Our of the blackness it came—gaunt and hollow and silent.

bartender put ginger ale into her glass. Could she take fifty tall drinks a night, otherwise? They could spend money on her at the gambling-tables, or sit with her and laugh and sing in the little side booths. All that they could do. It was her job. But they could not take her for a walk.

The border thought it had named her. It hadn't. The flower of Rosario, she was at first—and how a convent girl from the desert-locked Rosario hills came to a job in Al Capper's American Club would be the story of all Mexico's tragedy.

Enough that behind her lay an ancestry of Spanish nobles. Juan Sola, a *conquistador* in Coronado's army, had tired of the search for gold. He discovered a round valley, emerald green, there in the midst of many brown miles. To his sun-weary eyes it was the fortune he sought; a home place, a little kingdom for his own ruling. He secured the grant to it. His wife, the Donna Sola, came from overseas. Others followed. A church was established, of course, housed in a structure of adobe and rock that in time was to become the convent of Rosario.

Four hundred years later, there was in this girl, Anita, much of that old Juan Sola's blood. She was fair-haired, fair-skinned in the golden way of Castile touched by Mexico's sun. She could have ruled his kingdom, for all her slight little figure that brought up thoughts of a pale gold flower, carefully sheltered. But Anita arrived too late.

The Sola kingdom had diminished. She saw even the adobe house and the few remaining acres go, confiscated through changes of rule. Anita was in the convent then. At last she was driven from that, when the mission Padres were dispossessed.

It was then that the Juan Sola blood rose strong within her. He had been a *conquistador*, a crusader for a cause. So was she now, with her cause the returning of the church to the Padres. She would restore to other girls the only life that had given her happiness. How? Plots were already rumbling underground. But crusades take money, great amounts of it. And where was so much money to be had quickly? In one place, the border! Thus the Flower of Rosario came to Al Capper's club.

For two nights Jimmy watched her, and knew she was watching him. On the third night she brought a customer to his blackjack table. He was alone, having just finished off two sightseers from the dude ranch north of Arico.

He looked up, surprised that Anita had made this first move; then he saw the customer, a boy of barely twenty. His cheeks were as smooth and clean as an infant's, though flushed now. And he had a forced man-of-the-world air that showed this to be his first fling across the line.

Plainly, also, it should be his last. He was not the sort who could stand up under it. Already both the drinks he had taken, and the Flower, had gone to his head. As he came across the floor he had his arm around her and was trying to kiss her mouth. She sat him down opposite Jimmy.

Jimmy from his high stool caught her eyes. She had remained standing.

"Friend of yours?"

"Certainly." Anita smiled down upon the boy, who immediately jumped up with some wild gesture of taking her into his arms. She put him in his seat again.

"Deal him a hand, Don Jimmy!" she laughed. "A good one. Mother's waiting in El Paso. Ronald got off here by mistake." Her laughter faded a little. "Mother's waiting," she repeated. "The train for El Paso leaves at ten tonight."

Jimmy looked at her, reading the message telegraphed in her words. So that was it! Mother waits, and this cherub has spent his money. Well, whose business was that? Jimmy scowled. Then he glanced again at Anita. Her eyes came up to him, brown-gold, deep and warm. He shrugged, dealt two cards. The boy was playing a ten-dollar bill. Jimmy knew it was his last.

Over the boy's shoulder Anita looked at the cards. She smiled and put them face-down for him.

Jimmy drew to a nineteen and lost to the boy's pair of queens. He paid ten for ten.

"Let your twenty ride," said Anita.

Jimmy dealt again. Anita clapped her hands and turned up the boy's twenty-one. Twenty dollars for twenty dollars—the boy had forty now.

Again Anita advised him: "Let it ride. Forty and forty make eighty. That's all you'll need."

Jimmy flipped out two more cards each, gave himself a king in the hole with a ten-spot up. That was twenty for him.

He saw Anita peek at the boy's two. A little frown crossed her eyes. Then she whispered—but her voice came clearly: "Nineteen. Let it stand."



A gun roared—
Castro's body-
guard on watch
beyond the door.

Jimmy surveyed his ten-spot, thought of his king in the hole. Twenty. The boy had nineteen. Jimmy's mind did a handspring in arithmetic. He couldn't charge a loss like that to the house. How much was there in the old sock? The handspring repeated. Then he flipped a third card to himself. A deuce. Unmoved, he passed the boy eighty dollars.

It was Anita who took the money. She led her charge to the door, patted him out of it and toward the railway station taxi. Coming back she stopped at the bar and spoke to Al Capper. Al wrote something on a slip, opened the cash drawer.

Anita came on to Jimmy's table and tossed down four twenty-dollar bills.

"Thanks, Don Jimmy!"

He shook his head and pushed away the money.

She stamped her slippered foot at him. "Take it! That was my party!"

"Mine too," he answered. "But here." He took forty dollars from her pile. "I'll play you for it."

His thumb flicked over the cards, shuffled, cut, slipped out two.

Anita picked them up. She held Black Jack.

"So now then," Jimmy smiled, paying back her money, "run along."

WHATEVER Anita must have felt after that first meeting did not show, except in one way. She brought no more customers to Jimmy's table. And that once was an opening he did not follow up by going to her. When they met, they spoke. That was all. For Jimmy too had a cause, and he realized with keen intuition that he and the Flower should remain far apart. He was looking east to Broadway, tapping himself, heel and toe, up to the lights. He shrugged at love. Not for him!

Yet— There was Anita; night after night she floated before his eyes in the arms of other men. Sometimes when he watched them hold her his neck turned hot and his throat choked. He saw them kiss her rose-petal lips, and he hated her for smiling.

Before long he knew her working-habits to the minute; when she arrived at the Club, when she left. And at last he made a discovery.

As did other girls and most of the men who worked at the American Club, Anita lived across the line at Mother Riley's. She was on a definite shift, her job ending regularly at three o'clock each morning. The game-men too, were supposed to have their hours, yet often a heavy play at Jimmy's table held him over.

Finished, he would walk back to Mother Riley's and sit there in the little lobby, smoking a cigarette, talking through the several minutes that it took to wear off the nervous edge of his night's work.

It was a week after his play with Anita at the table, when he became aware of something.

Always she left the American Club before he did, sometimes half an hour ahead of him. Yet he reached Mother Riley's lobby first. Where she went meanwhile was none of his business, maybe. Only, there was no place for her to go!

Even the most reckless of the house girls, when alone, came straight across the border from the Club to the hotel. And Jimmy knew that Anita left the Club alone, and arrived in the lobby alone.

AT first he was puzzled, then curious, then aroused. She shouldn't be doing it! Anita was meeting no lover out there beyond the Mexican adobes. Her face was never flushed when she came in, her eyes only as bright as they always were.

Defiantly to himself he repeated that it was none of his business. And as defiantly he watched her. Because, if he knew about these long trips somewhere, might not some other man discover them also?

"Check!" said Jimmy. "Watch and pray!"

PERHAPS the prayer was left out, but on the fourth night's watch he saw Anita, after work, come from the dressing-room as usual, take her accounting from Al and start on. Tonight she had thrown a white scarf over her bare shoulders, and held one end of it up around her throat; muffled and warm, girl-fashion, with a short little dress not quite to her knees!

Jimmy stopped midway in an idle shuffle of his cards and took a long breath. Her bright red slippers clicked on across the floor and out into the dark.

It had been dude night at the American Club. Sleek young men-dolls, trying to look native in cowboy boots and flannel shirts, had drunk, danced, and spent their allowances from home. Most of them had gone back to the ranch by this time—three o'clock. But a few were left propped against the bar.

One, black-haired and hungry-eyed, turned as Anita passed. Somehow he had remained sober, or held it better. He spoke. She did not look at him. Her job was finished. With his eyes he followed her to the door. She vanished. He flung a silver dollar on the bar and sauntered out.

At once Jimmy stacked his cards, turned in the cashbox to Al Capper and took his hat. A taxi-driver waiting outside for dead-drunks nodded to him.

"Mike," asked Jimmy, "has the Flower gone by yet?"

Mike jerked a red head toward the street that made right angles away from the border fence. "Just turned the corner a couple of minutes ago."

"Thanks," said Jimmy. He accepted a cigarette from Mike and strolled on. But at the corner, unwatched, he threw away the smoke and trotted in silence close along the adobe wall.

The street was short. After the unbroken section of adobes were some scattered wooden houses, then the desert. Reaching the end of it, Jimmy stopped. Right? Left? Straight ahead?

It was straight ahead that a dark blob moved. Jimmy followed, scowling and puzzled. He approached until a man was visible. Was this the way Anita had gone night after night—out into the desert? What—

Truth came to him with a jolt. The church! The old abandoned mission was out here at the edge of town. But why that, at this time of night? Puzzled, he went warily on.

The man ahead moved with more caution, slowly, as if measuring his pace by that of some one in front of him. Then the church loomed gray against the sky. Jimmy closed up the distance. He had not seen Anita. The man stopped.

THREE came a creak of rusted hinges and a black square opened in the building. Even then Jimmy did not see the girl until a candle glowed far back in a vaulted room. Only her face was visible at first, pale and small and seeming at a great distance. Slowly the candlelight mounted. Its yellow flame spread about her little white figure. From the blackness came the forms of a bench, the altar, the roof beams overhead.

Anita knelt. For many minutes she remained there, alone, silent; and in those minutes something happened to Jimmy.

"God!" he breathed. "Oh, for God's sake!"

In time Anita rose and moved in the shadows. She

came back and stood before the candle. Suddenly the room was dark.

Jimmy took a step forward. Even in his absorption he had kept watch upon the dark form standing motionless closer to the church. He saw the man flatten himself at one side of the big doorway. Next Anita appeared. The man's voice spoke softly. She uttered a cry. She turned to run.

Then the man was upon her—and Jimmy upon him.

Never had Jimmy used his fists. That had not been a part of his profession. His first feeling now, was surprise, then a hot delight. He hit something soft like a stomach, then something hard like a rib. He reached out in a hug with both arms and went down to earth. There came a grunt and a moan. He sprang up, grabbed a handful of coat collar and started away.

"Don Jimmy!"

He stopped at Anita's cry.

"What are you doing?"

Jimmy looked down at the limp form. "I don't know. Get it out of here!"

Anita came close. She was trembling. "Don't!" she protested. "You'll choke him."

"I'll kill him!" Jimmy declared. But he released the coat collar. The man struggled and stood up groggily.

Jimmy gripped him again. "Listen, fellow. One more break like this from you—" He made a slashing motion across his throat. "See? Now leg it!"

IT was not until the dark form had stumbled back toward the border that Jimmy turned again to look at Anita.

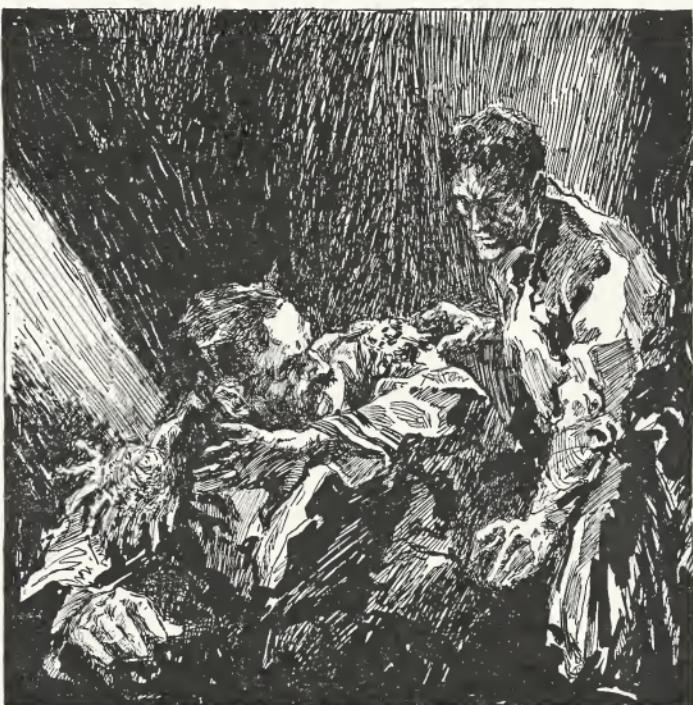
"For God's sake, what are you doing here?" His words came angrily. It was the only way he could speak. He was mad with desire to do the one thing that should not be done; take her in his arms, hold her there. Nothing mattered, only that! All the fervor of his watching her kneeled in the candlelight, so little and alone, beat again in his heart. His arms ached.

"Doing?" she repeated. "What does a girl usually come to church for?"

"But not now, this time of night, alone! I don't believe it. I've butted in, maybe—but—but I've got to know!"

"Do you?" Soft lips formed the words with lingering breath. She was asking him more than that one question.

"Yes! Oh, Anita!" he cried.



Close to his ear a voice said: "One move, and it's lights out!" Said the same

And in spite of himself Jimmy had her in his arms, pressing her head upon the hollow of his shoulder. He bent to her.

Anita turned her face away, though her sweet warmth was close against him. He kissed her cheek. With a quick responsive movement she lifted her lips to his—standing tiptoe to do it—then as quickly slipped out of his arms.

You want to know, Don Jimmy? And perhaps there is much I want to tell you—oh, much! Can't we sit somewhere—here?"

She groped backward. Jimmy caught her hand, tightly holding it with both of his. They reached the rise of steps and sat upon them close together, with the church and the wide desert behind their backs; in their faces the first gray of morning.

Anita shivered.

"I knew this was bound to happen, some time," she said, "—some one following me."

"Then why—" Jimmy began.

She looked at him. "For two reasons, Don Jimmy. Two very good ones. Night after night I come here for peace after that,"—one small hand swept toward the American Club,—"after that hell! That's one reason. The other—" She hesitated and turned her face to him as if wondering.

To give her time, he searched for a cigarette, found one



voice: "Anita! Quick now! Wait at the door."

and struck a match. It flared. In that instant of sudden light, Jimmy caught the soul of this girl unguarded within her eyes—and his dancing days were done.

After all, he was born a gambler. Too, the crusader is inherent in each of us, give us the right cause. Jimmy's cause was Anita.

What Jimmy heard from her there on the worn stone steps fired his dramatic blood. It was good theater—but real! As he listened his slow smile kindled. He was amused as well as amazed. Did wars ever begin like this, with a man and a girl sitting alone on the steps of a deserted church in the desert dawn?

Through Mexico the crusade had spread. Revolt was near. Only a few spots remained unequipped. Arico was one. Here the Federalists were only two squads, and one hundred men could take it and hold it against recapture. But guns were still lacking.

Not enough money had come in. Anita's part? Her job in the American Club paid a weekly salary, along with a percentage cut from the business she brought to the bar. The percentage she took each night, and hid it in this old church; five, ten, fifteen dollars. What better place for it? No one came to worship now, no one.

She was no longer the dancing-girl as she talked to Jimmy. She looked as he imagined Joan of Arc might have looked: dark eyes lit with quick eagerness, then sad,

struck with the pain of this thing she wanted done. It must be done! Did he understand?

No, Jimmy did not. He was not even trying to, and could only sit there gazing at Anita. But he nodded, and over her hand he pressed his, when she had finished, and left upon it two five-dollar bills.

"My split from the game tonight," he said. "Put it in the war-chest. Tomorrow I'll do better. I've saved up a little; enough for a draw-poker bank. I'll pay Al Capper a flat hundred a night for his table and take the winnings myself. Two thousand we need? Check! We'll have it in a week." He grinned. "I'm that good!" And he was.

Meanwhile on the surface of things Arico dozed through its days as usual. To the south and west, the rumbling had broken into the beginnings of storm. The press made its customary comments. No danger along the Arizona line. General Castro, the Federal bulldog, was on guard there.

Yet the rumble persisted; Anita took her percentage to its hide-away in the church each night; Don Jimmy did well in draw-poker.

Perhaps the only difference about Arico was the number of strangers who came in on burros and shaggy, dusty ponies, some from as far as the hills of Rosario. Having come so far, they seemed in no hurry to start back.

They camped at the desert's edge beyond the old church, and lived there on no one knew exactly what. Still, somehow they lived.

Seven days to the tick, Jimmy had his two thousand; and there passed through the barbed-wire border fence that night, some distance east of Arico, various long burlap bundles and many square boxes. At dawn the town awoke to the crack of a repeating-rifle fired rapidly. Another rippled like high thunder. Brown men scuttled along the streets.

Then Arico slammed its doors and waited behind them until the rippling gradually died away.

JIMMY had remained in the American Club. It was about mid-morning when Anita burst in upon him, gay and flushed. She saluted him as he sat at his poker table. "Captain, or Major—"

"Colonel, please," said Jimmy.

"All right, Colonel, the city is ours!"

"Check!" grinned Jimmy. "Spare only the dogs and cats!"

How the war was to be conducted, he did not know, nor much care. Those details were Anita's. He understood only that one hundred of the desert men who had come in on shaggy ponies had been armed here in Arico, and that a certain patriot, Mendoza, was leading them.

His own business was to continue earning the money. For of course the crusaders must be fed.

Somewhere Castro the Federal General was already marching to retake Arico. The telegraph told that. But it would be nothing. Anita, having word through Mendoza, said the engagement would not last more than a few hours.

Castro arrived in the hills on the second day. And then something happened.

Jimmy knew that the border would be closed to tourists while the battle was fought. That was customary. It would stop business at his poker table temporarily. Then the gates would be reopened and he could again take in the money.

What happened was perhaps chance, perhaps wisdom on Castro's part. He broke his Federalists into three detachments and encamped them south, east, and west about Arico. There they remained. Mendoza could not likewise

split his one hundred crusaders into three bodies. He would be too far outnumbered. So he stayed in Arico, waiting.

Now any soldier, regardless of noble cause or not, thinks with his belly.

Castro continued to sit upon the desert hilltops. Mendino continued to wait in Arico. The border gate was kept closed, and Jimmy idled at his poker table with no players. Beans and bacon in the mess-kits of the crusaders ran low. Four days passed and there was no wine. That settled it.

Jimmy had put a cot for himself in the deserted game booth of the American Club. Word had come across from Mother Riley that there was a United States Marshal in her Ambassador's Room talking about him. It seemed there had been some guns— Anyway, it was best for Jimmy to live temporarily south of the line.

HE was lying on his cot smoking an evening cigarette, when Anita flung the door open and stood there breathless and stricken-eyed.

"Don Jimmy!" she gasped. "Don't believe anything I say—not anything! Do what I—"

She broke off. The expression of her face was suddenly a mask.

Mendino was standing behind her, tall and dark and glowering. Beside him was another, short, fat-bodied, gray-moustached. Upon his face was a smooth, mirthless smile. He wore red breeches, with a coat of brilliant blue that had little gold balls dangling from gold braid epaulets. Two bandoliers studded with brass cartridges crossed his heavy shoulders. In a side holster swung an automatic forty-five.

He bowed.

"It is Don Jimmy?" he inquired.

Jimmy nodded.

"I," said the soldier, "am General Castro."

Jimmy swung his legs over the cot, jerked himself upright and blinked.

"What!"

Castro shrugged bluntly. "Arico has surrendered." He paused. His words came with oily smoothness. "And you, señor, you are my prisoner, unwilling as I am."

Jimmy surveyed him, and knew he faced a crafty customer. No open game here!

"Unwilling," Castro repeated, "and so, perhaps there is a way. Yes?" Slightly he inclined his round bullet-head toward Anita. "Who could refuse anything that such beauty might ask! And she has asked, Don Jimmy. You may go," Suddenly his manner changed. "But quick! Go now!"

Jimmy ignored him. His eyes fixed upon Anita. "Do you mean I'm to go, and you're to stay with—" He jerked his head sidewise.

She nodded. Her face told him nothing. Castro moved. She turned to the General, flashed her smile and went into his arms.

Jimmy was a good gambler, always; and that is why he took a chance.

But even as he doubled his fist, a gun roared and his right leg went numb beneath him. He had not seen Castro's bodyguard on watch beyond the door!

It was an easy victory for General Castro, this taking Arico. But not so easy, his taking the Flower.

It was Lent. Not that Castro held himself to his vows. They sat upon his heart with only the disturbing fear of a superstition. But Anita had begged the favor of him. That lily flower! Since it was her very purity and untouchedness that had attracted him, he reluctantly acceded.

Yet Lent was too long. And at any moment he might be called from Arico. This revolt was being settled. The Padres were promised their churches. The border gate was open again.

Five nights he walked with Anita to the old mission church. Such a child for devotion! He would not enter, no; things in there turned him cold. He stood outside looking on while she knelt in the candle-glow.

Often he cursed himself for his promise. Still that was not the real thing that held him. Castro wanted no mystery hanging over his head. Mysteries troubled his light moments—particularly this one: Where was that Don Jimmy?

He could not have passed through the guard line thrown about Arico—yet he was gone. The sentry who had been set to watch the adobe hut where the man had been thrown, had deserted. Some declared this sentry had ridden off on a horse. That was a lie. Soldiers had no money to buy horses. The Flower might know about Don Jimmy, yes. But Castro himself had followed her movements.

It was as he stood for the fifth time waiting at the church door, that patience left him. Tonight must mark an end to this! Unmindful of superstition, he strode past the doorway.

Anita was still kneeling when he reached her. Her lips had been moving, but stopped at his approach. Round about, save for the globe of candlelight, was the gloom of the century-old mission, thick with shadow, haunted by stilled voices. It echoed now only to the thud of his boots until—

Castro froze to immobility. Out of the very blackness of the floor on his right hand, it came, gaunt and hollow and silent.

He spun on his heel and was not sure whether the ghost or the girl tripped him. He went down. A cord bit about his neck.

Close to his ear a voice said hoarsely, "One move, and it's lights out!" The cord tightened.

Said the same voice:

"Anita! Quick now! Wait at the door."

SOME time later that night a guard in the line around Arico peered through the dark at two approaching figures, stood erect upon recognizing his General, saluted and took pay in a smile from the Flower. He stood back, grinning as they passed. That Castro and his way with women! Poetry under the stars!

Later still it was Mother Riley who opened a side door of the Border Hotel and let two unbelievable objects stumble in. The Flower she passed with a glance. But the other—the skeleton of Don Jimmy in a stuffed-out uniform; gold braid, bandoliers and all.

With Anita helping, he dragged himself in a scuffing limp to a chair. He dropped into it, and looked up then with that slow smile upon his lips. She clung to him, her cheek on his, and spoke so low that her words were lost.

But even grim Mother Riley, with her disbelieving old heart, knew that all of a girl's love was being whispered to Don Jimmy.

As he sat there his right leg was stretched stiffly forward. Food Anita had smuggled to him, where she had hidden him in the empty floor-crypt of the mission; and medicine too, for his bullet-shattered knee.

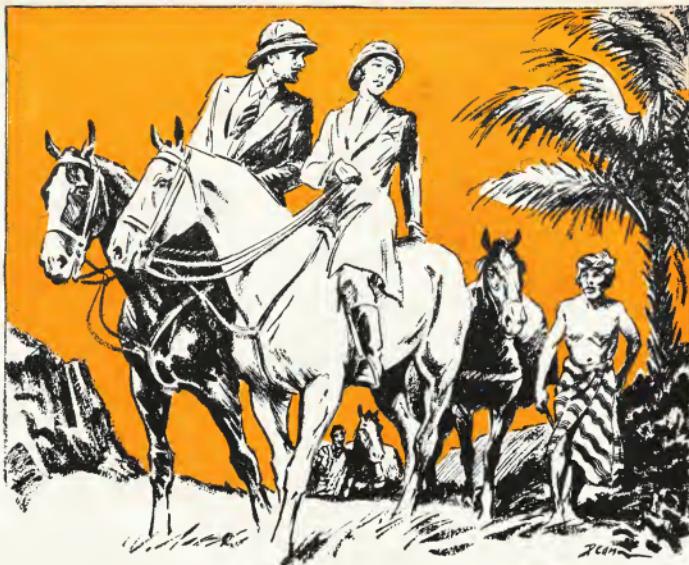
Yet Jimmy was a poor doctor. He would never tap-dance again. But that! What matter? After all, he was born a gambler. There's never a loss with that breed—always a win.

What were Broadway lights to Don Jimmy now?

'he dramatic story
of an American's
great adventure in
the East Indies—
the first of a fine
new series by a fa-
vorite writer.

By
WARREN
HASTINGS
MILLER

Illustrated by
Allen Moir Dean



Old Government Java

HE certainly was an urbane and polished liar, Jared thought. Myneher Van Roon set down the coffee-cup with a smack of his bearded lips and the enthusiastic exclamation: "Bei! What flavor! How you like, eh? —And you, Mees Hooker?" he added, gallantly including Ruth, Jared's sister, in this appreciation of that superb coffee.

"Delicious!" Ruth agreed. Her eyes beamed on the Controleur. A community of intellectual interest had already been established between them. Van Roon was an educated and courteous gentleman, exiled from the world of opera and art and books, as were so many Dutch officials at their various posts in the Malay Archipelago; and Ruth was finding him agreeable even if somewhat elderly.

Jared, however, was fairly bewildered with the implications of that sip of coffee and this Controleur's efforts to sell him the plantation that had raised it. Tastes and smells go back to boyhood days with peculiar force. With that flavor in his mouth, Jared was back in the Georgian mansion of the Hooker family on Church Street, Salem; and Grandfather Jared, the old clipper-ship captain, was smacking his lips over another cup of coffee and saying with gusto: "Good old Government Java! You can't beat it, my boy! Direct from my own plantation on Sumba!"

The same taste in his mouth now! Ruth wouldn't remember it. She wasn't born then, back in the '80's, when Jared Hooker III was a small boy, and Grandfather Jared was so proud of the family bean, brought direct from Sumba Island—then called Sandalwood Island. The *Mary Hooker*, medium clipper, called for loads of that aromatic wood bartered from savage datu's. She was long in port

at the business—this very port of Waingpu on Sumba. And Grandfather Jared, that canny Yankee, had exercised his commercial instincts meanwhile by getting a ninety-nine-year lease of coffee lands high up on the west flanks of Sumba's mountain range facing the Indian Ocean. He had planted it in *Caffea Arabica*, the famous bush native to Mocha in Arabia, the bean known commercially as "Old Government Java" because the Dutch Government then had almost a monopoly of it.

Jared was well aware of what had happened since: A mysterious blight had appeared. It defied the best efforts of scientific experts. It swept clean the plantations throughout Java, and the bushes had to be replaced with the Brazilian species, *Caffea Robusta*. All the coffee in the world was *robusta* now, except a very little produced still in Arabia; and all of that was taken by certain great English houses.

"*Robusta*, of course?" Jared inquired casually after the few brief moments while these recollections were whirling through his brain.

"Cer-tainly, Myneher!" Van Roon assured him. "They are goot bushes. Almost running wild now. That old drunkard Schouten owned it. He die sometime recently. You can buy it very cheap, Myneher. I attend to everything."

They always tried to sell the newcomer something; but this was a bit thick, Jared thought. The original lease to Grandfather Jared was in his pocket at that moment, and it had still fifty years to run. Surely the Controleur knew that there was an ancient American claim on this plantation—he had access to the land records. Anyway it was piquant, this charming fellow's attempt to sell him



Jared was bewildered with the implications of that sip of coffee, and the Controleur's efforts to sell him the plantation that had raised it.

his own plantation. And the bushes were *Arabica*, if the coffee in these cups meant anything. Was it possible that they had escaped the universal blight because of their location facing the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean? If so he had a gold mine here. But it was all going to be very complicated.

"Coom! I order ponies and tents. I show you him, if you like," urged Van Roon.

Ruth clapped her hands enthusiastically. "Splendid! Life in the jungle, and these picturesque natives, and everything? I'd love it!"

"You will like, Mees Hooker!" the Controleur assured her. "It ees well arranged. Everything *très confortable*. You bring some book."

His eyes lingered on her with appreciation. She was not pretty—or rather just missed being pretty; but her open and candid face, having vivacity and intellect in her gray eyes, was attractive, and a comradely woman's soul shone out of them. She had never married, was now in her thirties. Jared loved her strongly, his favorite sister. They two alone were left in the great mansion on Church Street. It was rented to strangers now. It had seemed best to them both to risk what principal they had left of the Hooker fortune in coming out here to see what had become of Grandfather Jared's plantation on Sumba.

Van Roon gave orders to the Residency's Number One. He was a bachelor, except for a Javanese *nonna* who didn't count, Jared gathered, as the three talked casually—though Ruth got most of his conversation. Soon there was a commotion outside, clatter of pony hoofs being driven up from Waingpu's dusty Main Street, shouts of Malay boys. Num-

ber One appeared, piecemeal hose ready, Masti he announced.

The Controleur escorted Ruth gallantly. Her eyes sparkled as they went on talking about pictures, music, the glories that were Holland—Rembrandt, Bee thoven. Like most of his countrymen Van Roon insisted that Holland was supreme in everything intellectual, had the greatest painter, the greatest composer, the greatest philosopher, the greatest poet. Jared looked for Ruth's, "Oh, come, now; how about Shakespeare?" but heard it not. He was uneasy. The unworthy bestowal of that fine sister's love was not a thing to be taken lightly. Van Roon was rather good-looking, bore his years well—beard iron-gray but of formal cut and becoming. As an intellectual giant and a man of

position and importance, he would be fascinating to Sis, who had turned down more than one prodigy of vapidity at home with her intellectual scorn. And others had been frightened off, on discovery of their lack of what Europe calls an education. Pity. She was a fine girl.

They were climbing up through paths in the hill rice, three saddle-ponies, and three pack-ponies laden with tents and provisions, a mob of brown boys in sarongs and turbans whacking them. Jared was left considerably alone. They talked together behind him, the mutual enthusiasms of exiles. Ruth could never stand Salem more than two years; then she grabbed what money she could lay hands on and fled to Paris. Van Roon was responding sympathetically with reminiscences of leaves home, Amsterdam, Marken Island, the great Rotunda in Rotterdam with beer and music.

Jared's thoughts were back in Boston as he rode. J. W. Bearse, the manager of a great wholesale grocery house there, was talking: "Cable us a slogan, Hooker. It requires more than merit to put over a new brand nowadays. Ballyhoo does it. We've art work and an advertising campaign to get started here if we are to handle your product exclusively. Look what the other fellows are doing."

Jared had looked, at the wave of his hand. Cans, bags, all national brands, some sloganizing with the blend of a famous hotel, some showing a camel suggestive of Arabia, though it all came from Brazil, some blazoning Egyptian and Turkish motives. The world's coffee—all of it was *robusta*, that immune bush. *Arabica*, with its pungent flavor, was gone long ago from the world's markets. Well, he had a slogan and a good one now. "*Old Government Java!*" There were thousands of people along the Atlantic seaboard who would still remember and smack their lips over it. They would pass it on to the younger genera-

tions. The brand would soon become national. It had the flavor back of it. Only the English nobility enjoyed *Arabica* now—another talking point.

They were crossing a jungly saddle in the mountains, and a declivity ahead gave view of the broad blue semi-circle of the Indian Ocean. Placid under the southwest monsoon it spread, a native proa or two and an infinitesimal tramp steamer the sole dots on it. A cool breeze met them up here two thousand feet above the sea as they came through the gap.

"Oh—lovely! I could live here forever!" Jared heard his sister cry out.

"You may, Mees Ruth," the Controleur said encouragingly. "Who knows? —Is it not superb?"

He had got to the comradeship of her first name now. Jared heard it with misgivings, but was eying what looked like a wide bank of snow under the thin tree-growth below. It was coffee, whips and crisscrosses of blossoming branches in millions. There was no sort of order in it now, all semblance of planted rows gone in replacement by natural seeding. Grandfather Jared's coffee! He hurried down to examine a specimen bush. The thin serrated leaf, the pinkish tinge at the heart of a petal, told him all. It was *Arabica*. It had survived the blight. Gold mine!

Jared went thoughtfully up the hill. They were busy with tents up there, Malay boys arguing and shouting, a cook-fire being started, more boys coming up out of a ravine rear by with pairs of brimming oil-tins on bamboo yokes, filled with spring water. Ruth and Van Roon sat apart side by side. A pang of pity went through the brother's heart. She was evidently happy in him. She had turned down her intellectual inferiors; here was a man she could look up to. And why not? He could not be more than fifty. He was an urbane and charming chap, broad-minded, Continental viewpoint on life, a Dutch official—the match for her. And yet he as her brother had to oppose it: The fellow was not overscrupulous. He had lied once about this coffee. He had not been backward about taking advantage of an obscure and probably forgotten title to try to sell this stranger his own plantation. The man who married Jared's sister must be incapable of anything of that sort, according to Jared's rigid New England code of business honor.

"You like?" Van Roon beamed as Jared neared them.

Jared shook his head. "Looks like *Arabica* to me," he said, to test him once more.

"Oh, no! Assuredly no, Mynheer!" There was obvious anxiety in his tones lest the purchaser be scared off. "It ees *robusta*. All is *robusta* that resists the blight, now. On Timor, on Sumbawa, all over Java and Sumatra." Van Roon waved an arm energetically toward Timor to the east and Sumbawa to the north. "There is no *Arabica* anywhere. No. Only a few bushes down in our experimental gardens in Waingpu. They are diseased, but our chemists must have them to work upon. Bring a spray of blossoms, Mynheer. I show you the difference when we get back to town," he insisted earnestly.

THAT was that. Jared was filled with inward elation over this last plantation of *Arabica* left. He could envisage the cans of his product all over the United States, familiar in every grocery shop: OLD GOVERNMENT JAVA, in big letters, with the pinkish blossoms, red berries, brown pods on a background of—red. Must have a note of color different than the other brands, to catch a purchaser's eye. This plantation was immune from the blight because Grandfather Jared had unwittingly established it on the most southward island of the Malay Archipelago. The fungus blight spores could not cross from Sumbawa Island to the north. There was no infection possible out of the

broad Indian Ocean to the south. His the exclusive rival of a famous old brand!

Jared was left much to himself that afternoon. Van Roon indicated perfunctorily the ancient boundaries of the plantation, but seemed preoccupied with something else much more important. He and Ruth went off somewhere to admire some view. Jared spent the afternoon in mathematics, tonnage, yield. The bushes needed pruning to six feet. Because of natural seeding, they had sloped far over the original boundaries. There was a thin growth of slender ficus trees over all of it that would provide the necessary shade. It would well repay trying for an extension of the original lease boundaries if possible. He could ship about thirty tons of bean per year as it was. But that was nothing, compared to the demands of a popular brand once nationalized in America.

IT was evening when he met Van Roon again. The man approached with that hesitant and embarrassed expression in his eyes with which a young man approaches the father of the girl he has spoken to. It was comical in that bearded and sophisticated man of the world; but Jared eyed him rather grimly, apprehensive of what was coming. Poor old Sis!

"Myneher," began Van Roon, clearing his throat, "in my country, when one would ask the hand of a young lady—"

Jared stopped him. "One moment, please. Does my name mean anything to you, Van Roon? Jared Hooker. Think, now," Jared bade him sternly.

The Controleur looked blank. "Myneher, I know not what you mean," he said wonderingly.

"This," said Jared, and drew out the old lease. "If you have looked back in your land records, you should know that your government leased this to one Jared Hooker in 1886. He was my grandfather. And the lease has still nearly fifty years to run."

"Bei!" Van Roon gasped. He stood eying the yellowed document with the arms of Holland at the top with incredulity, with complete discomposure. If it was acting, it was superb acting. A glance of hostile avarice finally shone through the expression of bewilderment. The real inner man was disclosed there, and it bade Jared beware. Van Roon was rearranging his ideas with this disclosure that he had not to deal with an innocent American interested in coffee concessions, but with an owner. That fiction of a sale in behalf of the heirs of the deceased drunkard—in which he would pocket the money himself—would have to go by the board. These thoughts were concealed behind a returning mask of urbanity, but Jared guessed them.

"Furthermore, this coffee is *Arabica*," he went on. Van Roon attempted a negative, still fearful that the whole deal would fall through if he let that stand, but Jared overbore it. "My grandfather planted it. As it escaped the blight, it seems to be valuable."

Van Roon's face brightened. Good! The American thought it valuable, did he? There was a chance here yet. "I'm sure you are mistaken, Mynheer," he said, "but we won't discuss that. My bushes down in the experimental gardens can settle that. I will look up this land lease. My congratulations, Mynheer, if it should still prove valid! There are legal questions, of use, you understand; the forfeiture clause, in case the plantation has not been worked for a term of years. . . . But we can arrange about that, between gentlemen, can we not?" His eyes gleamed cannily. "And now about your sister," he pursued this advantage of having the Controleur on one's side in difficult legal maneuvers. "Have I your permission, Mynheer?"

He was laboring under the Continental assumption that it is necessary to have permission of father or brother before going further with an affair of the heart.

"Have you spoken to her?" Jared asked.

"Of course not, Mynheer! Needless to speak of my own feelings; and I can imagine Ruth's thought." He was all urbanity and charm once more. Jared was in a quandary. The fellow had started in to make money out of him by selling him a supposedly worthless plantation of *Caffea Arabica*, but had fallen in love with Ruth in the process. And oh, much worse, she with him. Poor old Sis! The glamour of his intellectuality—he was just the man she ought to have, if he was only sound underneath. Jared would have to open her eyes, painful as that would be.

"I'd say no, Mynheer," he temporized. "You've hardly known more of you."

"Myneer!" Van Roon scarce concealed the anger in his eyes, the wounded pride that this brother of an American nobody did not jump at the chance to bestow his sister so favorably. Then he smiled silkily. "The tide of love has to be taken at its flood, Mynheer," he reminded Jared. "It means much to me! We have found each other, your sister and I!" he exclaimed with enthusiasm. "And you will do well to reconsider your refusal, Myneer Hooker."

There was something sinister in that. Jared had a hard time fathoming what he was driving at in all this. Jared did not know anything about Dutch marriage contract and procedure. It would be easy to let Ruth in for a heartbraking episode if he was not careful.

He eyed Van Roon grimly. "I've no doubt you are sincere, Mynheer. . . . But not now. Let it wait. Let's see how this plantation matter goes, first. I propose to develop it on a large scale, and I rely on you to see me through with the title. Until then—"

"As you will," said Van Roon stiffly, and left him.

HE was not to be let off that easily. Ruth herself came to their tents within half an hour, and her eyes were angry. Jared had never seen her so angry—and at him.

"What do you mean by interfering with my affairs this way, Jared?" she snapped at him with bitter coldness. "Hendryk tells me you refused him permission to—to propose to me; and I told him that you had nothing to do with it; and then he asked me and I'm engaged—so there!" she flared at him. "What right had you—I never heard of such a thing! He might never have spoken. How dared you?"

They both had New England tempers. And never hotter than before injustice or any usurpation of authority. Jared controlled his with difficulty under this unjust tirade. Misery overwhelmed him. The warm, affectionate congratulations on her engagement announcement that he had always hoped some day to give her—and now this stormy scene with her engagement thrown in his teeth! His ire was still hottest at Van Roon for forcing his hand this way by enlisting the sister on his side, the bounder! But he put that aside. He was in for an extremely difficult and trying situation here in making her understand.

"Hendryk? For heaven's sake, go slow, Sis!" he said. "We don't know anything about him, really."

"Only that he is the man of my dreams!" Ruth cut in raptly. "What if he is a little older? I'm no simpering girl. A man that I can be proud of."

That was just it. Poor Sis! Jared's business friends at home had never made much of a hit with her. She was too learned. She could never be proud of a husband whose ideas stopped with business, golf, bridge. This Controleur was of the world of government, of intellectual ferment, of the fine arts, the world of the gourmet and the boulevardier. She had taken this infatuation for him like a disease, poor thing!

"Just your kind, I'll admit," said Jared. "But—"

"But what?" she asked with hostility.

"Well—he certainly lied to me about this coffee being *robusta*, didn't he?" Jared offered. "We know darn' well it is *Arabica*, for Grandpa planted it himself. Good old Government Java, he called it. He used to be so proud of it, though you would not remember that. But I do."

"How could Hendryk know about all that?" she defended the Controleur with spirit. "They may have replanted it all in *robusta*, long ago, for all you know. You're no coffee expert—though you seem to think you are," she taunted him with a flash of scorn in her eyes.

THIS was getting to be a sultry business for him, Jared thought. He protested: "Maybe; but how about our lease? You can't tell me he didn't know about it, yet he was trying to sell us our own plantation when we came up here—"

"I'll not listen to any such insinuation!" Ruth interrupted him hotly. "He told me about that. He honestly did not know. It was long before his time. Why in the world should he have looked back in the old records when we came here, will you tell me? He thought he was doing us a favor. Now, I've had enough of your wretched suspicions!" Ruth flared up again. "You'll come down with me and congratulate him, like a man, right now, or I'll never speak to you again!" She stamped her foot with finality.

Gosh! Jared had been on the point of warning her that Van Roon was playing with her, but the thought was just too cruel, and it would only bring an irreparable explosion in her present mood. Better to meet craft with craft—and above all, wait. He went down and congratulated his prospective brother-in-law, like a man. Briefly—and with reservations that were understood between the two men.

They arrived back in Waingpu next day, and Jared set about the business of protecting himself and his sister. Two strange Americans in a totally foreign town: Tile-roofed Government buildings; one small marketplace with shops; streets and streets of native thatch and bamboo houses set in small gardens. Nowhere to turn for help. The Controleur was a little king here. Nothing could be done without his knowing all about it first. The one Dutch lawyer to be interviewed in Waingpu was a henchman of Van Roon's, and was blank-faced about any notification of the Controleur's engagement. The marriage laws of Holland were complicated, Jared found out by artful questioning without further mentioning the engagement. It required time, legal contracts, banns posted, permission from relatives and clergy, a whole paper regulation of doings before any marriage was valid. Pitfalls there for Ruth! As for the lease, the lawyer had nothing to do with that; it all went through the Controleur to Batavia. Fine chances for manipulation there, Jared thought.

Well, thank God he had the cable, his one tie with the outer world here. He sent one off to the manager of Bearer & Co., in Boston:

"Slogan Old Government Java. Suggest blossom spray art work. Yield thirty tons. Look up Controleur Van Roon Dutch Consulate full report. Advise Batavia direct to Jared Hooker lease whether valid immediate answer collect. Can begin shipping bean when title clear. Jared Hooker."

He saw that off in the little telegraph office and sighed with relief. He did not feel so lonely now. Energetic American men at home would bring the powers of Big Business to bear on this forgotten plantation, lost for fifty years on Sumba Island. Big Business owes much, these days, to the acumen of those old Yankee sea-captains who

first opened up the possibilities of the East. It reaps now where they sowed. The clipper ships are gone. Then, after a long period of no flag at all on the high seas, once more our ships are to be seen in every port in the Far East. Behind them Big Business, developing trade where the clipper-ship captains left off: the story of tin, rubber, quinine, cocoa, kapok, coffee, gum, teak. . . .

In characteristic Yankee fashion Jared plunged into the details of coffee-picking and transportation without waiting to hear from Batavia on his lease. He trusted to our State Department, nudged by Bearse & Co., to smooth that out. America was always hungry for more coffee—provided you gave her a distinctive brand; and she rode rough-shod over any legal quibbles in the way of it. The sprays bore blossoms, red unripe berries, and brown ones ready for treatment, all on the same stem, all the year around. There was no reason why he should not start right in. He needed the recruiting of women to pick, needed flat areas of concrete for sun-drying, sheds for storage out of the rains, ponies for bringing the bags over the mountains, wharf-privileges.

The Controleur was most helpful there. Urbane and easy-going as ever, there was guarded hostility between them over Ruth, but the man made no difficulties in getting forward with the plantation. The only thing he was vague about was in securing them a bungalow. They still lived at the hotel. And nothing was to rent, it seemed. One would have to build, in this small and crowded town. Ruth was with him, on one pretext or another, most of the time. Every evening over the piano, for she played well, and he had a good voice and was enthusiastic over all the opera arias; and daytimes on rides together.

The wives of Dutch officers and officials were cold to Ruth, however. A stranger and an American, and no *van* to her name. That seemed to cover it, so far as they were concerned. Jared thought it went deeper than that. The Controleur's latest fancy, they regarded her. They had seen no banns published. Nor had Jared. Trust women to see deep into a situation of this sort! He still could not guess Van Roon out, in all this, but they were warning him. He could trust Ruth with him, but was on his guard against pitfalls just the same. If he had to consent to the marriage, for her sake, he would make sure that that was all properly legal and Dutch. . . .

"Surat for you, Tuan!" Jared was in the midst of a small army of his own and overseeing the pouring of concrete flats when Ali came to him with a yellow envelope in his brown paw. It had been sent up from the town telegraph office. Jared tore it open and read, with a quick frown: "BATAVIA REPORTS LEASE O. K. BUT WORTHLESS. COFFEE SUBJECT TO BLIGHT. CLOSE OUT CREDITS AND COME HOME. VAN ROON HAS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN IN AMSTERDAM. J. W. BEARSE."

Damn! There is nothing so timid as capital. Bearse had dropped him like a hot potato with the mere breath of that old story of the blight on *Coffea Arabica* in the Islands. He had only his own slender capital to go on now,



"How dare you insinuate such things!" Ruth burst in.
"You haven't shown me an atom of proof."

and it was not near enough. And no distributor in the United States. . . . Well, Ruthie was safe!

Rage suffused Jared as he read the cablegram again. Damn them all! He had a fortune here, if they would only go ahead with it!

"*Coffee subject to blight.*" His wasn't, it happened; but Big Business was cautious, and a cablegram trying to prove it would scarce reopen the deal with Bearse & Co. He would have to go home and prove it to J. W. Bearse over his own table. . . . Those words, however, had sinister implications. His plantation, his wealth, was subject to blight, if—

There were a few *Arabica* bushes on this very island, diseased, kept for chemical experimentation down in the tropical garden run by the Government. Jared wished they were miles away! The mountains protected his plantation from their fungus spores, but—

He had a sudden desire to look at those bushes, just to witness with his own eyes this baleful blight that had defied the best efforts of chemical experts. It had been the reason for the rise of Brazilian coffee, *robusta*, that immune bush that now ruled the world's markets.

Jared hurried down to that little garden back of the fort. Prime rows of herbaceous plants, all labeled scientifically. Palms, bamboos, tree ferns, each with its enameled label on the trunk. A section of bushes: teas of several sorts, camphor bushes from Burma—parents of big plantations to replace the reliance at present on great indigenous camphor trees that took hundreds of years to mature. . . . Jared came to the coffee section. Various sorts of *robusta*. Their leaves and bark showed experimentation with spray solutions against tree-lice and beetles. They had no other pests. But the *Coffea Arabica*—a dozen bushes in prime rows of six had that label. They looked sickly and dying. A moldy fungus covered their stems shriveled their leaves. Those at one end were young, but little affected. They advanced progressively with the

Jared was raging, blinded with outraged indignation.



disease, so that those at the far end of the row were moribund, almost leafless. And one of those was gone. . . .

Jared stared at the area of packed earth where a bush had once stood. It had been dug up and transplanted by some one, the roots cut with a spade far out so that it would live some time, maybe keep right on growing. A shout of fury broke from him as he realized where that bush must be now. The blight could not go over the mountains, but a bush bearing it might very well be carried there! The swine! . . . The motivation back of such a dastardly trick? Simple enough; the Controleur had no faith in *Arabica* as a world product, but it would be easy to plant the land in *robusta* once the owner could be induced to sell out for a song. He had failed with the lease; very well, the diseased bush would not fail him! And Ruth? Much he cared about breaking her heart!

"By God!" Jared almost sobbed with rage and humiliation. "Oh, the skunk! The *skunk*!" That mephitic objuration seemed to fit Van Roon—charming fellow—and his methods! It satisfied. There were things that you did to a skunk, as a matter of course, when discovered. Jared had disposed of one once in New England. A long pole prying up the boulder under which it had hidden; both barrels of his shotgun fired into the noxious lair of the beast. . . .

But first you repaired the damage. The skunk could wait. He would still be there. Jared could trust Ruth with him just a little longer, but the bush could not be left a moment on his plantation. It was already at work. A scratch of Jared's fingers in the dry soil showed him dampness just under the surface, proving that the bush could not have moved more than two days ago. Jared hurried out of the garden and mounted his pony, clattered off up the mountain road that led to his plantation. He felt utterly helpless before this mysterious power of the fungus blight. He did not know what he could do to save his plantation from its infection. He could envisage the deadly spores, borne invisibly on the southwest monsoon,

settling on all the coffee to leeward of that bush, infecting them all, spreading like a fire. How could one man stop it? Futile, this mission!

But the dogged New England granite in him was dominant when the Tuan Besar rode galloping over the saddle and down into his coffee tract. It was now alive with sleek little Javanese women pickers at work over the berries. A yelp from Mat Pangku, the elderly foreman in charge of the counting of bags: "*Tabeck Tuan!* Lo, much-much brown berry in this-herre!"

"Did man-man send'm bush up from Waingpul little days behind?" Jared asked him abruptly.

"In truth, Tuan. It was bad bush. No good! I me no understand'. It was order to plant him there." Mat waved a lean brown arm down toward the extreme south-west angle of

the tract. It was a fatal location!

"Whose order?"

"Yours, Tuan, man-man say. Me, I t'ink you *mabok* (drunk). So I plantum *da-sini*." Mat pointed up the hill to the northeast. Jared ejaculated a heartfelt, "Thank God!" Van Roon had overstepped himself for all his mephitic cunning! He had not dared to be seen accompanying the fatal bush himself, but had sent a couple of coolies with it, with orders to Mat to plant it as directed. There was hope!

"Also I make fire," said Mat. "Verrie, verrie bad bush! Look, Tuan." There was smoldering smoke up there, white and drifting before the southwest breeze. A native remedy, simple but effective while it lasted. The fine spores had no chance against those drifting atoms of smoke. They were caught and carried away by them as fast as given off by the diseased bush.

"Come," said Jared. "We burn him. Whose coolies bring bush?"

"Belong Controleur, Tuan!" said Mat with perplexed astonishment. "Him all-same flien' you, no?"

"Oh, yes!" Jared laughed happily. His heart sang as they went up to that barrage of smudge fires that Mat had seen fit to set. Beyond them they tore up in haste a freshly planted *Coffea Arabica* all yellow with blight and bearing death on every inch of it.

"Verrie bad bush, Tuan. Me make'm big fire. You burn." Mat poked up one of his smudges and threw on dry branches till it roared with flame. Into it Jared cast that menace that would destroy a fortune and send him home, defeated, at the mercy of the urbane Van Roon.

"More better now, Tuan," said Mat with relief. "You no savee coffee! Bad. Bad! You no sending more bush?" Mat asked anxiously.

"No. Man he come, you fight 'em, that's all!" Jared grinned. "We go see bags now."

It was not necessary to tell him more. Jared inspected the tiers of bags growing under a sketchy shed of attap.

Time for his pony trains already! He would be shipping the first Old Government Java in many years out of Sumba in a few weeks more. This could go on and on, now. Why, he was *started*, he realized with heart-thumps of joy. He was in position to ask for bank credits to eke out his own capital. The bags were the convincing argument. So long as they kept coming—

Only, there was not room enough on Sumba for himself and the Controleur after this, Jared resolved grimly as he rode back to Waingpu. He had no idea how Van Roon was to be officially recalled, but he proposed to administer personal reasons that would be effective. If the man stayed, it would be in the hospital!

RUTH greeted him, flustered and impatient, when he entered his big room in the Eastern Hotel. "Why, Jared! Where *have* you been?" she asked him huffily. "I've been sending all over town for you. Hendryk is coming this afternoon for me, and we are to be married right off and take tonight's boat for Batavia. There's some trouble about your lease, he says, so he has to go to Batavia about it, and we might as well make it our honeymoon. You have to give your consent, that's all. Mere formality—but you are going to be a good boy now and not make any fuss about it, aren't you?" she wheedled, in persuasion and sisterly blandishment.

Jared laughed shortly. "So he's coming here for you, is he? Good! I'm ready for him now."

She turned, hostile again. "What do you mean?" she asked, her temper rising in the Controleur's defense.

Poor old Sis! He hated to plunge the knife into her heart. She had grown positively beautiful these days, in her happiness, her dreams, her confidence in Van Roon in spite of Jared's sinister suspicion, her hunger for an intellectual companion as her husband.

"Only this," he said. "He's been trying to ruin us, Sis—to force me to sell out a worthless plantation to him at his own price. Now, listen," he went on with more force as she tried to interrupt indignantly. "He sent a couple of his coolies with a blighted bush out of the experimental gardens and told them to plant it on our tract so it would be swept by the blight and ruined. Friendly trick, eh?"

"How awful!" she gasped. "But Hendryk could not do such a wicked thing, I assure you!" she flared. "Some other person. They none of them like us here."

"Well, he did," Jared persisted. "I just got back from burning the bush. No harm done—fortunately. And furthermore, Sis, he's just playing with you, as I've told you right along. He can't marry you legally without banns published, and a whole lot of stuff. He'll take you to Batavia and leave you there, in some hotel, when he gets tired of you, that's all. Only, I won't permit it—"

"How dare you insinuate such things!" Ruth burst in on him violently. "You haven't shown me an atom of proof that he had anything to do with this bush affair, and the rest is low, unspeakable, out of your own prejudiced mind—"

"All right," said Jared wearily. "Read it." He drew out the cablegram and handed it to her.

Poor Sis! He saw her eyes dilate when they reached those fatal words, saw her lips pucker in woe, the tears spring to her eyes. The single shuddering exclamation—"Oh-h-h!" escaped her.

Then she collapsed in a chair, her white shoulders heaving, her head in her arms.

It cut Jared to the heart. . . . He dared not so much as lay the hand of sympathy on her shoulder at that moment, for she hated all men with the fierce fury of the woman betrayed, disillusioned. Poor dear Sis. . . .

"Tuan Controleur calling, Tuan."

A hotel boy stood in the doorway. Jared got up, his eyes bleak, stony. Down the great stairs and into an airy side parlor he strode, in his eyes vengeance. Van Roon awaited him alone there. A handsome skunk, all in gleaming starched whites, with a carnation on his left breast held by a gold pin. White cotton gloves, sun-hat and swagger stick laid carefully on a table. Coming to take his sister to her ruin!

"Mynheer—" He forced a smile of placation before Jared's formidable stare.

"You swine!" Jared moved on him with fists clenched. "Put 'em up, if you've got any! I'm going to beat you up like a dog."

"But Mynheer—" The Controleur gave back before him. "Oh, well, if you so wish," he said haughtily, stiffly. "But not that way between gentlemen. Pistols, and you shall have satisfaction. My card—"

He had whipped it out angrily. Jared struck it from his hand.

"Not a chance! *You*—married man—blighted bush on my plantation—selling a harmless stranger his own tract!" The words rasped through his clenched teeth. "Put 'em up, I say!"

Van Roon attempted a defense. *Crack!* With that first blow Jared saw red, the lust of punishment, the righteous ire that means to hurt. *Crack!* Chairs flew; tables overturned. His man dodged, attempted to escape. The hotel sprang into uproar, white men, native boys, charging in. Jared brushed them off like hornets and pursued Van Roon with long, lunging blows that cracked bone where they hit. He was raging, blinded with outraged indignation; when he was finally held back by the strength of three men at his arms and around his waist, Van Roon lay quivering in a corner, passed out completely.

THE rest was Big Business. Waingpu hushed up its row as best it could, but the great world outside moved swiftly and silently for justice and progress. A new Controleur reported while Van Roon was still in the hospital, a young and cordial chap.

"My Government apologizes, Mr. Hooker," he said, referring to the late official on Sumba. "It never permits its Controleurs to engage in private business; they must remain incorruptible, you understand. And to destroy the last plantation of *Arabica* in our possessions was most reprehensible—" He pursed his lips regretfully. "We sincerely hope your plantation has not been infected."

"It hasn't." Jared grinned. "Mat Pangku, my foreman up there, has been watching for that. He honestly believes that I don't know a thing about coffee! But I was lucky, very! Tell you the inside story some day."

Jared was completely surrounded by cablegrams. Bearse & Co. had come back, with enthusiasm, once there had been paper enough expended. And out in the roads lay a husky American freighter calling for the first lot of Old Government Java. Not much, but enough to start the advertising and sample campaign. There would be more, and more, and more. . . .

Ruth? Well, there was an American millionaire off a yacht, about a year later. His ideas did not wander much beyond golf and bridge and yacht-racing, but he was a cheerful devil and perfectly content to let his wife do the talking about Rembrandt and Beethoven and all those other intellectual giants. He made her a good match—an opposite. There was something solid and honest, deep down and all there with the fundamentals, about him. He got on well with Jared. They had a bang-up American wedding on the yacht—which was American territory—the only Dutchman present being Pastor Dubbs of the little Reformed Church in Waingpu. Good old Sis!



*We have here
the sad, heart-
searching saga
of a desperate
high-pressure
automobile
salesman who
accepted a used
mule as a trade-
in—and lived to
regret it.*

By M. BOWMAN
HOWELL

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

Half a Horse

PHIL WANGLE (known as "Super") was conducting the Monday morning pep meeting in the sales-room of the Whizzer Six agency at Oakmore. He had just concluded a eulogy on the new models.

His smooth, round, guileless face was now turkey-red. Veins bulged along his fleshy neck. His vest alternately sagged and tightened over a puffing, slightly protuberant abdomen.

"A Whizzer Six for every gas-station in town!" he boomed from the platform. And thereby set the quota for the month—a heavy quota, for gas-stations are built in Oakmore as fast as they can tear out the dying miniature golf-links.

Super had been talking for twenty minutes. He was getting a reaction from his audience. He shed his coat and vest and loosened his tie. He gave an arm-waving exhibition that would do credit to a Congresswoman.

He imitated a "ham" reciting Kipling's "Boots." His slicked hair fell beneath the onslaught. It curtained his eyes and completed a *Jekyll and Hyde* transformation.

"Let's give 'em the old war-cry!" he shouted.

He bounced up and down like an organ-grinder's monkey. Eighteen other monkeys bounced in unison. The meeting took on the appearance of a Holy Roller session.

At a signal from Super, they burst into a throaty roar:

*"Ala Kabala Kaboom!
Up the hills with a zoom!
No gears to clash,
No fears of smash,
Whizzer has more leg-room.
Rah! Rah! Rah!
Zis! Boom! Bah!
Whizzer Six! Whizzer Six!
Hoo-rah! Hoo-rah! Hoo-rah!"*

Before the last *rah* could decently expire, Super burst into song. The monkeys, turned to sheep, followed the

leader. The refrain of "Jingle Bells" echoed through the building to the words:

*"Whizzer Six! Whizzer Six!
Up the hills on high.
Oh, what fun it is to ride
So fast you seem to fly!
Whizzer Six! Whizzer Six!
Motor smooth as glass.
Thirty miles or more to ride
On every gal of gas!"*

Super, the meeting and the song collapsed simultaneously. Salesmen fled to close deals while still flush with enthusiasm. Super mopped his neck and remembered his blood-pressure. When he felt it safely below the explosion point, he also fled—but to the cashier's cage and the collection of five dollars for conducting the meeting.

A rich mahogany-veneered door faced the cashier's cage. It was gold-lettered, "A. MARTIN, Pres." Pocketing five dollars, Super entered the door.

"Good morning," he said to A. Martin, who was preparing a letter for mailing.

"Is it?" questioned A. Martin, with that peculiar expression of intelligence that goes with licking the mucilage on postage-stamps.

Super wondered how the man could be such a fool and president of the Whizzer Six agency. But A. Martin knew why Super was there. He wondered how any man could be such a fool and yet a crack salesman.

"I'm still after the Meyers deal," stated Super bluntly.

"Well, that's interesting," answered A. Martin innocently and noncommittally.

Super marveled at the man's stupidity. "I'd hoped you'd changed your mind."

"You get another hope. The Whizzer Six agency is not in the livestock business. I've told you that before. We are not taking mules as trade-ins on our cars. You're supposed to be the best salesman we have. If you can't sell

Meyers without buying a mule, let one of the other boys have a chance at him."

"I tell you," said Super doggedly, "the old fool is as stubborn as the mule he wants to trade. He won't listen to reason. He wants a hundred dollars on the mule, or it's no trade."

"Well," A. Martin sighed regretfully, as though the matter was entirely beyond his control, "I don't know what you're going to do about it. Of course, if you want to handle the mule on your own, that's none of my business."

Super could feel the old blood-pressure soar a notch or two. He'd better get out before he was calling A. Martin and the mule by the same name. He turned and left the office without a word.

Climbing into his sedan in front of the agency, Super viciously slammed the door of the car. The door stopped at the body, but the glass kept on going. Broken particles covered the velvet seat and rubber-matted floor.

It was too much. A vibrating blood-pressure crystallized and broke. Black specks danced before Super's eyes. He swooned with passion. . . .

It was several minutes before Super was able to drive the car. On the road to Meyers', he pondered on the advisability of becoming a mule-owner. He wondered what a mule Skinner was.

He'd have to make the sale. The boys at the office were beginning to rib him about it. There was only one way to quiet them. That was to make the sale. Why not take the mule as a trade-in? That gang of braying jackasses at the agency would drive him crazy with their lame puns about mulish prospects if he didn't do something. One jackass is easier to handle than a dozen.

Mentally he reviewed the problem from the financial angle. There was a hundred to be made on the sale of the car. The profit would go into the mule. But he'd have the animal. Whatever he got out of the mule would be clear. A half-loaf is better than none, isn't it? Super decided to make the best of a bad bargain. He'd sell Meyers this very morning. He'd take the mule for eighty but not a hundred. That ought to be enough to satisfy the old skinflint.

Super was fully recovered when he knocked at Meyers' door. He was, in fact, exuberant. Another sale, although profitless, would help to place him at the head of the sales-list. And this one wasn't totally without gain. There was the mule.

"Well, well," he beamed on his prospective customer, "I've come to sell you that car today."

"Then I'd better get the mule."

"I'll tell you," said Super: "I've talked to the president, and you can take delivery today with an allowance of eighty dollars on the mule."

"You better come back when the president says a hundred," Meyers answered, starting to close the door.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," hastily interjected

Super, before the quarry could escape. "I'll make up the other twenty out of my own pocket. I want to see you have that car."

"Then I better get the mule."

Meyers disappeared toward the barn. He returned shortly, leading a huge, rawboned brute of an animal. It was docile enough while Meyers tied the halter rope to the bumper of Super's car.

"His name is Black Jack," Meyers said.

"He looks like a nice quiet mule." Super extended a nervous hand towards Black Jack's nose. The mule rolled his eyes. He snorted at Super, and Super snorted at Black Jack. The mule backed to the end of his tether, and Super backed halfway across the yard.

"He won't bite," consoled Meyers. "That's just his way. He's a little nervous about automobiles."

"Maybe we better have him trucked to town."

"Maybe you better," Meyers agreed. "But that'll cost you five dollars."

"Maybe we better let him trot along behind."

"You better start along, then. I'll be along later in the flivver to make out the papers and take delivery. Better not go too fast. He's a little nervous about cars."

"Couldn't you bring him along?"

"He aint my mule."

With a martyred sigh Super climbed into the sedan. He started the motor. He let the clutch out slowly. Best to humor Black Jack until they got started.

He was too careful. The car jerked ahead. Black Jack jerked behind. The sedan retaliated with another jerk. There was a crash at the rear of the machine.

Super cursed fluently as the motor died. He got out to survey the damage. At the rear fender he decided to postpone his investigations pending the removal of one large and seemingly irate mule. He yelled for Meyers. "What's the matter?" called Meyers from the barn.

"You better come here and get Black Jack away from my car. He's trying to wreck it!"

After Meyers had led the animal to a safe distance,



"What are you going to do?" demanded the traitor in uniform. "Do I give you a tag or don't I?"

Super dared a look at a crushed and mangled gas-tank where Black Jack had planted a hoof.

"Maybe you better bring him to town, and I'll pay the five dollars," suggested Super ruefully.

Super sighed with relief as he started to town. He heaved a greater sigh later that afternoon when Meyers left the agency with a new Whizzer Six. Black Jack was safely deposited in the used-car lot.

TUESDAY morning, Super stopped at the lot to look over his latest acquisition. Black Jack was tethered at the back of the lot. He was surrounded by automobiles that had long since passed their prime. At the moment, the mule's head was in the tonneau of a 1923 Bledsoe touring. He was nibbling tentatively at the excelsior padded upholstering. "Shoo!" yelled Super.

There was a ripping sound. Black Jack shooed. He took with him a yard of upholstering and the greater part of the Bledsoe's top.

Super surveyed the wreckage in disgust. He left for the agency. Bill Kerrigan, in charge of the lot, met him at the sidewalk. Bill was wrathy.

"If that domesticatedlop-eared zebra is yours, you better get him out of here," he proclaimed. "No wonder that guy Meyers wanted to get rid of him! He's a menace to society—that's what he is! Since last night he's ruined three tires and the upholstering in two sedans. Why don't you get him something to eat?"

"I'd forgotten all about it," meekly apologized Super. "I'll do it right away. I'm going to get rid of him this afternoon." He didn't mention the Bledsoe.

Super returned a few minutes later with a dollar sack of oats. He compared Black Jack with the sack. The oats didn't seem any too much for an animal of that size. Super poured the contents of the sack on the ground and went to the garage for a bucket of water, then another—and another. Super quenched the fifth bucket, though Black Jack didn't appear the least tired of drinking it. "I'll sell him to a glue-factory; that's what I'll do," Super muttered savagely.

There was an idea. Super had heard of glue-factories buying livestock. He wondered how much they would pay.... The glue factory's offer of ten dollars, sight unseen, was disappointing. A second factory offered seventy-five. A dozen calls to soap factories, feed and fuel concerns and transportation companies failed to bring a better offer than that made by the original glue prospect. Super swallowed his pride. He called Meyers.

"I've been wondering if you couldn't keep Black Jack until I can find a buyer," Super stated over the phone. "Maybe you can find one. I'll sell him for seventy-five and give you a ten-dollar commission."

"I'll keep him," Meyers answered. "But you'll have to bring him out. I'm pretty busy these days. You won't have any trouble. Just take it easy, and remember he's a little nervous about automobiles."

Super shuddered as he hung up the receiver. Well, he'd have to take Black Jack back to the farm. He wasn't going to pay out five dollars for a little job like that. He'd only been a trifle hasty before.

He'd have to get rid of that animal pretty soon if he was going to make anything on the deal. That mule was beginning to cost money. Five dollars for transportation, and a dollar for oats, already.

Black Jack snorted a couple of times when Super took the halter and led him to the street. Super was a little nervous about mules, just as Black Jack was nervous about automobiles. They both had a breakdown when a roadster went by with the muffler open—just as Super was tying Black Jack to the back of the sedan.

The mule puffed and reared. Super puffed and feared. The barrier broke—Black Jack was away! He led the field of two trucks and a roadster.

Super was off to a poor start but came up fast in the Whizzer Six. A red light halted the race at Sixth and B streets. But not for Black Jack!

A traffic-cop waved him down. Black Jack waved two ears in reply and let out a notch. Super and the traffic cop teamed up.

At Seventh Street Black Jack made a left-hand turn. He wasn't interested in traffic regulations. He made another left turn at the next corner. In the middle of the block, the Whizzer boxed him in.

The law leaped for the halter. Black Jack leaped for the sidewalk. Pedestrians leaped for the street.

Black Jack made another left turn at the drug-store on the corner. The drug-store suspended business for a few moments. It was cool in the drug-store. When Super and the officer arrived, Black Jack was thoughtfully masticating the bouquet on the soda-fountain.

It was a peaceful mule that followed the traffic-cop to the curb. Black Jack was tied to a lamp-post. Super, after considerable argument, settled with the druggist for five dollars. But the cop was still waiting at the curb.

"Is this your mule?" he demanded sternly.

Super eyed him with nausea. Now wasn't that just like a traffic cop? Who did he think the mule belonged to? Did the idiot think he was a professional mule-chaser? "Of course it's mine," he growled.

"Well, what's it doing galloping all over town?"

"It's a racing mule, having a morning workout," Super scowlingly muttered under his breath.

"What's that?"

"I said, it ran away this morning."

"You better get that car of yours and run it where it belongs," threatened the officer.

SUPER humbly turned to obey. Better not make any more trouble—that mule had cost him enough now.

A yielding Black Jack submitted to the humiliation of again being fastened to the bumper. He was yielding to the extreme. He sat down. And he stayed down.

"Get up," yelled Super.

The serenity of the brute was exasperating.

"You might gee and haw him," the cop suggested.

"Gee!" bellowed Super.

"Haw!" echoed the law.

Black Jack disdainfully flicked his ears.

"Why don't you give him a pull with the car?" helpfully offered the policeman.

Super didn't think much of the idea. He told the policeman why. He pointed out the canon in the gas-tank. But the evidence did not convince his listener.

"He can't sit there all day, like an oversized jack-rabbit. If you don't get him out of there, I'll put a tag on him."

"What kind?" Super asked. His curiosity had overcome discretion.

"For parking, that's what. He's leaning on that fire-plug." The law whipped out the ever-handy book of tags.

"Never mind. I'll give him a pull." Super made a dive for the driver's seat and started the motor. He let the clutch out slowly until it took hold. The sedan moved forward a couple of feet, jerked, and the motor died.

Super cursed the car, the mule, the traffic-cop, Meyers, the Whizzer Six agency and the group of imbeciles laughing on the sidewalk. He started the motor again. Raced it, this time, while releasing the clutch.

The tires shrieked on the pavement. The acrid odor of burned rubber filled the air. Black Jack still sat.

The law leaped for the halter. Black Jack leaped for the sidewalk. Pedestrians leaped for the street.



"You're choking the mule to death!" shrieked a female onlooker.

Several men in the crowd looked threateningly at Super. The law felt the antagonism in the air. "Shut it off," the officer yelled harshly. "I told you to give him a pull, not choke him!"

In the sedan a crushed and broken Super sat behind the wheel. Beads of sweat glistened on his brow.

"What're you going to do?" truculently demanded the traitor in uniform. "Do I give you the tag, or don't I?"

Super tried to answer. He waved his arms feebly.

"I'll call the man I got him from," he whispered brokenly. In the drug-store, he got Meyers on the phone.

"He sat down on the corner and won't get up. I've tried everything. You better come down . . . What? It'll cost ten dollars—you're busier now? All right, all right. I'll pay it. Just come down here and get that darn' mule out of here."

Super turned from the telephone in despair. He faced the druggist, who had collected five dollars. The druggist was feeling better.

"You look all in," he said feebly.

"I am."

"Maybe a little drink would make you feel better," offered the druggist.

Super grasped at the last ray of sunshine in a clouded world. "It'd help a lot," he said.

In the prescription-room, the druggist pulled out a bottle. "Help yourself," he offered.

Super looked his thanks. He pulled heavily on the bottle. The druggist smiled. Super had another pull. "I think I better go back and face the music," he said.

The cop was still waiting at the curb. Black Jack waited behind him. Super wanted to kick the cop where it would do the most good. He seriously considered doing it to Black Jack. But the crowd was too threatening.

Super glowered at the mule. Black Jack was not resentful.

"Gee," barked Super.

A most astounding thing happened. Black Jack heaved to his feet. Super gasped. So did the cop. The latter recovered first.

"Get into that car and get going before he sits down again."

"Not me," Super replied in a pained voice. "There'll be a man here for him in a few minutes."

"Get him out of here, I tell you," the cop shrieked, shoving his nose within an inch of Super's.

His expression changed suddenly.

"I might have known it," he said. "Drunk all the time! You won't get any tag now. You and me are going for a ride."

Super tried to argue. That made the cop positive. Nobody but a fool or a drunk would argue with a cop.

It was then that Meyers rattled up in the flivver. The officer was in no mood to waste words.

"Is this your mule?" he questioned.

"Nope," said Meyers. "I just came after him."

"Then take him and get out of here." And the law turned on Super. "Now if you're not too drunk to—

"But, Officer, I'm not drunk. You see, it was like this—

"Don't tell me. You'll get a chance to tell it. . . .

Super did tell it. He told it to a desk-sergeant. The sergeant was sympathetic but not very helpful. He gave Super the test for being drunk. He dismissed that charge.

He wrote Super's name in a big book. Opposite was the charge, *"Disturbing the peace."*

"I'd advise you to plead guilty," he said. "It'll cost you less in the end."

"But I haven't done anything."

"I still advise pleading guilty," asserted the sergeant. Super pleaded guilty.

In the courtroom the judge smiled with gratification. He liked the ones who pleaded guilty. It made the job pleasanter.

"I should make an example of you," said the judge. "But the court will be lenient."

He beamed on Super. Super beamed on the judge.

"Fifteen dollars!" thundered His Honor, changing the beam to a lightning-bolt. "Pay the clerk. Next case."

Super paid the clerk. "That mule," he said, while handing over the money, "is a half a horse on me."

"And this," said the clerk, "is no place for levity."

Meyers still has the mule.



The Triumph

Tarzan of the Apes is the son of an English lord; but he has rebelled against civilization and returned to the life of the wilderness in Africa. Civilization, however, now threatens to invade his primitive retreat.

For Lafayette Smith had undertaken certain geological explorations in Africa; and on the steamer he had made the acquaintance of an amiable young racketeer known as Gunner Patrick who was taking a vacation from warfare with enemy gangsters. Patrick had invited himself to go with Smith, and the scientist had found him an amusing companion.

Stabutch had a definite mission to carry out for his Red employers—to kill Tarzan of the Apes. For (as you who read "Tarzan, Guard of the Jungle" will recall) Tarzan had courageously thwarted Russia's attempt to embroil the other European nations in their African colonies. Yet he got off to a bad start, for a crew of raiding *shifas* or bandits under white leadership frightened off the Russian's safari and later made Stabutch prisoner and carried him off to their stronghold.

Lady Barbara fared even worse. She landed safely enough by means of her parachute; but found herself the captive of a queer degenerate people who for nearly two thousand years had lived by themselves in this shut-off mountain valley. Only the lurking fear inspired by her extraordinary arrival—perhaps she was after all a goddess!—prevented them from making of her another human sacrifice. One fair-haired girl, strangely different from her kinsfolks, befriended Lady Barbara and took her for shelter and sanctuary to her own cave.

Lafayette Smith and Gunner Patrick had better luck at the start of their journey; but one night a hungry lion carried off one of their men. Patrick opened fire with his sub-machine-gun and wounded the beast. Then the gun jammed and the lion charged. They had given themselves up for lost when a powerful white man clad only in a leopard-skin dropped from a tree-branch in the lion's path, then leaped astride its back!

Spellbound, Smith and Patrick and their blacks stood staring incredulously at the sight before them. They saw Numa turn quickly and throw himself to the ground in an effort to dislodge his opponent. They saw the free hand of the man repeatedly drive home the point of his knife in the tawny side of the raging lion.

The battle was brief, for the already sorely wounded animal had received the spear-thrust directly through its heart, and only its remarkable tenacity of life had permitted it to live for the few seconds that intervened between the death-blow and the collapse.

As Numa slumped suddenly to his side, the man leaped clear. For a moment he stood looking upon the death-throes of his vanquished foe. Then he stepped closer, and placing one foot upon the carcass of his kill, he raised his face to the heavens and gave tongue to a cry so hideous that the black men dropped to the ground in terror, while the two whites felt the hair rise upon their scalps. (*The story continues in detail:*)

For a long moment the two stared at one another. "Most interesting," thought Lafayette Smith. "A splendid specimen."

The Story So Far:

BEFORE Tarzan of the Apes knelt Kabariga, chief of the Bangalo people, many weary marches to the south of the Ghensi Mountains.

Alone in the cold wet clouds, far above an unknown African mountain range, Lady Barbara Collis found her petrol almost exhausted and her Cape-to-Cairo flight hopeless. She breathed a little prayer as she bailed out, and counted ten before jerking the rip-cord of her 'chute.

In Moscow, Leon Stabutch entered the office of Stalin, the dictator of Red Russia.

Ignorant of the very existence of the black Bangalo chief, or of Leon Stabutch, or Lady Barbara Collis, one Lafayette Smith, A.M., Ph.D., Sc.D., twenty-six years old, professor of geology at the Phil Sheridan Military Academy, boarded a steamship in the harbor of New York.

Far apart, these people! Yet Fate was weaving a web that brought them into close and dramatic conflict.

Weeks rolled by. Trains rattled and chugged. Steamships plowed. Black feet padded well-worn trails. Three safaris, headed by white men from far-separated parts of the earth, moved slowly along different trails that led toward the wild fastnesses of the Ghensi. None knew of the presence of the others; nor were their missions in any way related.

From the west came Lafayette Smith and Gunner Patrick; from the south an English big-game hunter, Lord Passmore; from the east, Leon Stabutch.

of Tarzan

By EDGAR
RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

ONCE again upon the jungle fell the silence and the paralysis of momentary terror. Then faintly, from the far distance, came an answering challenge. Somewhere out there in the black void of night a bull ape, awakened, had answered the victory cry of his fellow. More faintly, and from a greater distance, came the rumbling roar of a lion.

The stranger stooped and seized the haft of his spear. He placed a foot against Numa's shoulder and withdrew the weapon from the carcass. Then he turned toward the two white men. It was the first intimation he had given that he had been aware of their presence.

"Geeze!" exclaimed Gunner Patrick, beyond which his vocabulary failed to meet the situation.

The stranger surveyed them coolly. "Who are you?" he asked. "What are you doing here?"

That he spoke English was both a surprise and a relief to Lafayette Smith. Suddenly he seemed less terrifying. "I am a geologist," he explained. "My name is Smith—Lafayette Smith; and my companion is Mr. Patrick. I am here to conduct some field research work—purely a scientific expedition."

The stranger pointed to the machine-gun. "Is that part of the regular field equipment of a geologist?" he asked.

"No," replied Smith, "and I'm sure I don't know why Mr. Patrick insisted on bringing it along."

"I wasn't takin' no chances in a country full of strange smokes," said the Gunner. "Say, a broad I meets on the boat tells me some of these smokes eats people."

"It would come in handy, perhaps, for hunting," suggested the stranger. "A herd of antelope would make an excellent target for a weapon of that sort."

"Geeze!" exclaimed the Gunner. "Wot do you think I am, Mister, a butcher? I packs this for insurance only. It sure wasn't worth the premium this time, though," he added disgustedly, "—jammed on me right when I needed it the most. But say, you were there, all right. I gotta hand it to you. You're regular, Mister, and if I can ever return the favor—" He made an expansive gesture that completed the sentence and promised all of a reciprocity nature that the most exacting might demand.

The giant nodded. "Don't use it for hunting," he said; and then, turning to Smith: "Where are you going to conduct your research?"

Suddenly a comprehending light shone in the eyes of the Gunner, and a pained expression settled definitely upon his face.

"Geeze!" he exclaimed disgustedly to Smith. "I might of known it was too good to be true."

"What?" asked Lafayette.

"What I said about there not bein' no cops here."

"Where are you going?" asked the stranger again.

"We're going to the Ghensi Mountains," replied Smith.



"Say, who the hell are you, anyhow?" demanded the Gunner, "and what business is it of yours where we go?"

The stranger ignored him. "Be very careful in the Ghensi country," he said to Smith. "There is a band of slave-raiders working there at present, I understand. If your men learn of it, they may desert you."

"Thanks," replied Smith. "It is very kind of you to warn us. I should like to know to whom we are indebted for—" But the stranger was gone.

As mysteriously and silently as he had appeared, he swung again into the tree above and disappeared. The two whites looked at one another in amazement.

"Geeze," said Danny.

"I fully endorse your statement," said Smith.

"Say, Ogonyo," demanded the Gunner, "who was that bozo?" You or any of your men know?"

"Yes, bwana," replied the headman. "That was Tarzan of the Apes."

CHAPTER VI

THE WATERS OF CHINNRETH

LADY BARBARA COLLIS walked slowly along the dusty path leading from the Midian village down to the placid lake that lay in the bottom of the ancient crater



which formed the beautiful valley of the land of Midian.

At the right hand of Lady Barbara there walked Abraham the son of Abraham, and at her left the golden-haired Jezebel. Behind them came the "apostles," surrounding a young girl whose sullen countenance was enlivened occasionally by the fearful glances she cast upon the old men who formed her escort or her guard. Following them marched the remainder of the villagers, headed by the elders. Other than these general divisions of the cortège, loosely observed, there was no attempt to maintain a semblance of orderly formation. They moved like sheep, now huddled together, now ranging beyond the limits of the narrow path to spread out on either side, some forging ahead for a few yards only to drop back again.

Lady Barbara was apprehensive. She had learned many things in the long weeks of her virtual captivity among this strange sect. Among other things she had learned their language, and the mastery of it had opened to her inquiring mind many avenues of information previously closed. And now she was learning, or she believed she was, that Abraham the son of Abraham was nursing in his bosom a growing skepticism of her divinity.

Her very first night in Midian had witnessed her introduction to the cruel customs and rites of this degenerate people; and as she acquired a knowledge of the language of the land and gained an appreciation of the exalted origin the leaders of the people attributed to her, and her position of spokesman for their god, she had used her influence to discourage, and even to prohibit, the more terrible practices of their cult.

While recollection of the supernatural aspects of her descent from the clouds remained clear in the weak mind of Abraham the son of Abraham, Lady Barbara had been successful in her campaign against brutality; but daily association with this celestial visitor had tended to dissipate the awe that had at first overwhelmed the prophet. The interdictions of his heavenly guest were all contrary to the desires of Abraham the son of Abraham. Such were the foundations of the prophet's increasing skepticism; nor was the changing attitude of the old man toward her unrecognized by the English girl.

Today he had ignored her, and was even foring her to

accompany them and witness the proof of his apostasy. What would come next? She had had not only ocular proof of the fanatical blood-frenzy of the terrible old man, but she had listened for hours to detailed descriptions of orgies of frightfulness from the lips of Jezebel. Yes, Lady Barbara Collis had become apprehensive, and with reason; but now she determined to make a last effort to reassert her waning authority.

"Think well, Abraham the son of

Abraham," she said to the man walking at her side, "of the wrath of Jehovah when He sees that you have disobeyed him."

"I walk in the path of the prophets," replied the old man. "Always we have punished those who defied the laws of Jehovah; and Jehovah has rewarded us. Why should He be wroth now? The girl must pay the price of her iniquity."

"But she only smiled," argued Lady Barbara.

"A sin," replied Abraham the son of Abraham. "Laughter is wicked, and smiles lead to laughter, which gives pleasure, and all pleasures are the lures of the devil. They are wicked."

"Do not say any more," said Jezebel, in English. "You will only anger him, and when he is angry he is terrible."

"What sayest thou, woman?" demanded Abraham the son of Abraham.

"I was praying to Jehovah in the language of heaven," replied the girl.

The prophet let his scowling gaze rest upon her. "Thou dost well to pray, woman."

"Then I shall continue praying," replied the girl meekly, and to Lady Barbara, in English: "The old devil is already planning my punishment. He has always hated me, just as they always hate us poor creatures who are not created in the same image as they."

The remarkable difference in physical appearance and mentality that set Jezebel apart from the other Midians was an inexplicable phenomenon that had constantly puzzled Lady Barbara and would continue to puzzle her, for she could not know of the little fair-haired slave girl whose prepotent personality still sought to express itself beyond a grave nineteen centuries old. How greatly Jezebel's mentality surpassed that of her fellows had been demonstrated to Lady Barbara by the surprising facility with which the girl had learned to speak English while she was teaching Lady Barbara the language of the Midians. How often and how sincerely had the English girl thanked a kindly Providence for Jezebel!

The procession had now arrived at the shore of the lake, which legend asserted to be bottomless, and had halted where a few flat lava rocks of great size overhung the waters. The apostles took their places with Abraham the son of Abraham upon one of the rocks, the girl in their midst. Then a half-dozen younger men came forward at a signal from Jobab. One of their number carried a

fiber net, and two others brought a heavy piece of lava. Quickly they threw the net over the now terrified and screaming girl, and secured the lava rock to it.

Abraham the son of Abraham raised his hands above his head, and at the signal all knelt. He commenced to pray, in that now familiar gibberish that was not Midian, nor, according to Jezebel, any language whatsoever, for she insisted that Abraham and the "apostles," to whose sole use it was restricted, could not understand it themselves. The girl, kneeling, was weeping softly now, sometimes choking down a muffled sob, while the young men held the net securely.

Surely Abraham the son of Abraham abandoned the ecclesiastical tongue and spoke in the language of his people. "For as she has sinned, so shall she suffer," he cried. "It is the will of Jehovah, in His infinite mercy, that she shall not be consumed by fire, but that she shall be immersed three times in the waters of Chinnereth, that her sins may be washed from her. Let us pray that they may be not too grievous, since otherwise she shall not survive." He nodded to the six young men, who seemed well schooled in their parts.

Four of them seized the net and raised it between them, while the remaining two held the ends of long fiber ropes that were attached to it. As the four commenced to swing the body of the girl pendulum-like between them, her screams and pleas for mercy rose above the silent waters of Chinnereth in a diapason of horror.

To and fro, with increasing rapidity, the young men swung their terror-crazed burden while Abraham and his assistants chanted to the cadence of the swinging sack.

Then at a signal the young men released their hold upon the net, and the body of the girl shot downward toward the dark waters of the lake. There was a splash. The screaming ceased. The waters closed in above the victim of cruel fanaticism, leaving only a widening circle of retreating wavelets and two fiber ropes extending upward to the altar of castigation.

For a few seconds there was silence and immobility, except for the groans and responsive cries of the assembled villagers.

Then Abraham the son of Abraham spoke curtly again to the six executioners, who immediately laid hold of the two ropes and hauled the girl upward until she swung, dripping and choking, just above the surface of the water.

For a brief interval they held her there; and then, at a word from the prophet, they dropped her again beneath the waters.

"You murderer!" cried Lady Barbara, no longer able to control her anger. "Order that poor creature drawn ashore before she is drowned."

Abraham the son of Abraham turned eyes upon the English girl that almost froze her with horror—the wild, staring eyes of a maniac, piercing pupils rimmed round with white. "Silence, blasphemer!" screamed the man. "You may be next."

"Oh, please," whispered Jezebel, tugging at Lady Barbara's sleeve. "Do not anger him more, or you are lost."

Abraham the son of Abraham turned to the young men; again, at his command, the victim was drawn above the surface of the lake. Fascinated by the horror of the situation, Lady Barbara had stepped to the edge of the rock, and looking down, saw the poor creature limp but still gasping in an effort to regain her breath. She was not dead, but another immersion must surely prove fatal.

"Oh, please," she begged, turning to the fanatical leader. "In the name of merciful God, do not let them lower her again!"

Without a word of reply, Abraham the son of Abraham gave the signal, and for the third time the now unconscious girl was dropped into the lake. The English girl sank to her knees in an attitude of prayer, and raising her eyes to heaven pleaded fervently to her Maker to move the heart of Abraham the son of Abraham to compassion, or out of the fullness of His own love to save the victim of these misguided creatures from what seemed now certain death. For a full minute she had prayed, and still the girl was left beneath the waters. Then the leader commanded that she be raised.

"If she is now pure in the eyes of Jehovah," he cried, "she will emerge alive. If she is dead, it is the will of Jehovah. I have but walked in the paths of the Prophets."

The six young men raised the sagging net to the surface of the rocks, where they rolled the limp form of the girl out to where Lady Barbara knelt in prayer. And now Abraham appeared to notice the attitude and the pleading voice of the English girl for the first time.

"What doest thou?" he demanded.

"I pray to a God, whose power and mercy are beyond your understanding," she replied. "I pray for the life of this poor child."

"There is the answer to your prayer," sneered the prophet contemptuously, indicating the still body of the girl. "She is dead, and Jehovah has revealed, to all who may have doubted, that Abraham the son of Abraham is His prophet and that thou art an impostor."

"We are lost," whispered Jezebel.

Lady Barbara thought as much herself, but she thought quickly, for the emergency was critical. Rising, she faced the prophet. "Yes, she is dead," she replied. "But Jehovah can resurrect her."

"He can but He will not," said Abraham the son of Abraham.

"Not for you, for He is angry with him who dares to call himself His prophet and yet disobeys His commands." She stepped quickly to the side of the lifeless body. "But for me He will resurrect her. Come, Jezebel, and help me!"

Now, Lady Barbara, in common with most modern, athletically inclined young women, was familiar with the ordinary methods for resuscitating the drowned; and she fell to work upon the victim of the prophet's homicidal mania with a will born not only of compassion, but of vital necessity. She issued curt orders to Jezebel from time to time, orders which broke but did not terminate a constant flow of words which she voiced in chant-like measures. She started with "The Charge of the Light Brigade," but after two stanzas her memory failed, and she had recourse to "Mother Goose, snatches from the verse in "Alice in Wonderland," Kipling, Omar Khayyam—and, as the girl after ten minutes of heartbreaking effort commenced to show signs of life, Lady Barbara closed with excerpts from Lincoln's Gettysburg address.

Crowded about them were Abraham, the six executioners, and all the rest; while beyond these, the villagers pressed as close as they dared to witness the miracle—if such it was to be.

"And that government of the people, by the people and for the people, shall not perish from the earth," chanted Lady Barbara, rising to her feet. "Lay the child in the



There was no smile upon the face of the man as he addressed Stabutch.



net," she commanded, turning to the wide-eyed young men who had cast her into the lake, "and carry her tenderly back to the cave of her parents. Come, Jezebel!" And she started away; to Abraham the son of Abraham she vouchsafed not even a glance. . . .

That night the two girls sat at the entrance of their cave looking out across the uncharted valley of Midian. A full moon silvered the crest of the lofty escarpment of the crater's northern rim. In the middle distance the silent waters of Chinnereth lay like a burnished shield.

"It is beautiful," sighed Jezebel.

"But oh, how horrible, because of man," replied Lady Barbara, with a shudder.

"At night, when I am alone, and can see only the beautiful things, I try to forget man," said the golden one. "Is there so much cruelty and wickedness in the land from which you come, Barbara?"

"There are cruelty and wickedness everywhere where men are; but in my land it is not so bad as here."

"They say the men over there are very cruel," said Jezebel, pointing across the valley. "But they are beautiful—not like our people."

"You have seen them?"

"Yes. Sometimes they come searching for their strayed goats, but not often. Then they chase us into our caves, and we roll rocks down on them to keep them from coming up and killing us. They steal our goats at such times, and if they catch any of our men they kill them too. If I were alone, I would let them catch me, for they are very beautiful and I do not think they would kill me. I think they would like me."

"I don't doubt it," agreed Lady Barbara; "but if I were you, I would not let them catch me."

"Why not? What have I to hope for here? Perhaps some day I shall be caught smiling or singing, and then I shall be killed; and you have not seen all of the ways in which Abraham can destroy sinners. If I am not killed, I shall certainly be taken by some horrible old man to his cave; and there, all my life, I shall be a slave to him and his other women, and the old women are more cruel to

such as I than even the men. . . . No, if I was not afraid of what lies between, I should run away and go to the land of the North Midians."

"Perhaps your life will be happier and safer here with me, since we showed Abraham the son of Abraham that we are more powerful than he; and when the time comes that my people find me, or I discover an avenue of escape, you shall come away with me, Jezebel—though I don't know that you will be much safer in England than you are here."

"Why?" demanded the girl.

"You are too beautiful ever to have perfect safety or perfect happiness."

"You think I am beautiful? I always thought so too. I saw myself when I looked into the lake or into a vessel of water, and I thought that I was beautiful, although I did not look like the other girls of the land of Midian. Yet you are beautiful, and I do not look like you. Have you never been safe or happy, Barbara?"

The English girl laughed. "I am not *too* beautiful, Jezebel," she explained. . . .

A footfall on the steep pathway leading to the cave caught their attention. "Some one comes," said Jezebel.

"It is late," said Lady Barbara. "No one should be coming now to our cave."

"Perhaps it is a man from North Midian," suggested Jezebel. "Is my hair arranged prettily?"

"We had better be rolling a rock into position instead of thinking about our hair," said Lady Barbara.

"Ah, but they are such beautiful men!" sighed Jezebel.

Lady Barbara drew a small knife from one of her pockets and opened the blade. "I do not like beautiful men," she said.

The approaching footfalls were coming slowly nearer, but the two young women, sitting just within the entrance to their cave, could not see the steep pathway along which the nocturnal visitor was approaching. Presently a shadow fell across their threshold, and an instant later a tall old man stepped into view. It was Abraham the son of Abraham.

Lady Barbara rose to her feet and faced the prophet.

"What brings you to my cave at this time of night?" she demanded. "What is it, of such importance, that could not wait until morning?"

For a long moment the old man stood glaring at her. "I have walked with Jehovah in the moonlight," he said presently, "and Jehovah hath spoken in the ear of Abraham the son of Abraham. Thou hast deceived me. With trickery, perhaps even with sorcery, thou didst bring to life her who was dead by the will of Jehovah, and Jehovah is wroth."

"You heard my prayers and you witnessed her resurrection," Lady Barbara reminded him.

"Thou speakest even as Jehovah prophesied," said the prophet. "And He spoke in my ear and commanded that I prove thee false, that all men might see thy iniquity."

"Interesting, if true," commented Lady Barbara, "—but not true."

"Thou darest question the word of the prophet?" cried the man angrily. "But tomorrow thou shalt have the opportunity to prove thy boasts. Tomorrow Jehovah shall judge thee. Tomorrow thou shalt be cast into the waters of Chinnereth in a weighted net; nor will there be cords attached whereby it may be drawn above the surface."

CHAPTER VII

THE SLAVE RAIDER

LEON STABUTCH, mounted behind one of his captors, riding to an unknown fate, was warrantably perturbed. He had been close to death at the hands of one of the band already; and from their appearance and their attitude toward him, it was not difficult for him to imagine that they would require but the slightest pretext to destroy him.

What their intention might be was highly problematical, though he could conceive of but one motive which might inspire such as they to preserve him. But if ransom was their aim, he could not conjecture any method by which these semi-savages might make contact with his friends or superiors in Russia. He was forced to admit that his prospects appeared most discouraging.

The shiftas were forced to move slowly because of the packs some of their horses were carrying since the looting of the Russian's camp. Nor could they have ridden much more rapidly, under any circumstances, on the trail they entered shortly following their capture of Stabutch.

Entering a narrow, rocky cañon, the trail wound steeply upward to debouch at last upon a small level mesa, at the upper end of which Stabutch saw what at a distance appeared to be a palisaded village nestling close beneath a rocky cliff that bounded the mesa in that direction.

This evidently was the destination of his captors, who were doubtless members of the very band the mere rumor of which had filled his men with such terror. Stabutch was only sorry that the balance of the story, postulating the existence of a white leader, was evidently erroneous, since he would have anticipated less difficulty in arranging the terms and collection of a ransom with a European than with these ignorant savages.

As they neared the village, Stabutch discovered that their approach had been made beneath the scrutiny of lookouts posted behind the palisade, whose heads and shoulders were now plainly visible above the crude though substantial rampart.

And presently these sentries were shouting greetings and queries to the members of the returning band as the village gate swung slowly open and the savage horsemen entered the enclosure with their captive, who was soon the center of a throng of men, women and children, curious and questioning.

Although there was nothing actively menacing in the attitude of the savages, there was a definite unfriendliness in their demeanor that cast a further gloom of apprehension upon the already depressed spirits of the Russian; and as the cavalcade entered the central compound, about which the huts were grouped, he experienced a sensation of utter hopelessness.

It was at this moment that he saw a white man in native costume emerge from one of the squalid dwellings, and instantly the depression that had seized him was partially at least relieved.

The shiftas were dismounting, and now he was roughly dragged from the animal which had borne him from his camp and pushed unceremoniously toward the white man, who stood before the doorway whence he had appeared, surveying the prisoner sullenly, while he listened to the report of the leader of the returning band.

There was no smile upon the face of the white man as he addressed Stabutch after the black shifta had completed his report. The Russian recognized that the language employed by the stranger was Italian, a tongue which he could neither speak nor understand; and this he explained in Russian, but the man only shrugged and shook his head. Then Stabutch tried English.

"That is better," said the other brokenly. "I understand English a little. Who are you? What was the language you first spoke to me?"

"I am a scientist," replied Stabutch. "I spoke to you in Russian."

"Is Russia your country?"

"Yes."

The man eyed him intently for some time, as though attempting to read the innermost secrets of his mind, before he spoke again. Stabutch noted the squat, powerful build of the stranger, the cruel lips, and the hard crafty eyes; and he guessed that he might have fared as well at the hands of the blacks.

"You say you are a Russian," said the man. "Red or White?"

Stabutch wished he might know how to answer this question. He was aware that Red Russians were not well beloved by all peoples, and that the majority of Italians were trained to hate them; and yet there was something in the personality of this stranger that suggested that he might be more favorably inclined to a Red than to a White Russian. Furthermore, to admit that he was a Red might assure the other that a ransom could be obtained more surely than from a White, whose organization was admittedly weak and poverty-stricken. For these reasons Stabutch decided to tell the truth.

"I am a Red," he said.

THE other considered him intently and silently for a moment, then made a gesture that would have passed unnoticed by any but a Red Communist. Leon Stabutch breathed an inaudible sigh of relief, but his facial expression gave no indication of recognition of this secret sign as he answered it in accordance with the ritual of his organization.

"Your name, comrade?" inquired the bearded one in an altered tone.

"Leon Stabutch," replied the Russian. "And yours, comrade?"

"Dominic Capietro. Come, we will talk inside. I have a bottle there, wherewith we may toast the Cause and become better acquainted."

"Lead on, comrade," said Stabutch. "I feel the need of something to quiet my nerves. I have had a bad few hours."

"I apologize for the inconvenience to which my men hav-

put you," replied Capietro, leading the way into the hut; "but all shall be made right again. Be seated. As you see, I lead the simple life; but what imperial throne may compare in grandeur with the bosom of Mother Earth?"

"None, comrade," agreed Stabut, noting the entire absence of chairs, or even stools, that the other's speech had already suggested and condoned.

Capietro rummaged in an old duffel-bag and at last withdrew a bottle which he uncorked and handed to Stabut. "Golden goblets are for royal tyrants, Comrade Stabut," he declared, "but not for such as we, eh?"

Stabut raised the bottle to his lips and took a draught of the fiery liquid, and as it burned its way to his stomach and the fumes rose to his head, the last of his fears and doubts vanished.

"Tell me now," he said, as he passed the bottle back to his host, "why I was seized, who you are, and what is to become of me?"

"My headman told me that he found you alone, deserted by your safari, and not knowing whether you were friend or enemy, he brought you here to me. You are lucky, comrade, that Donga chanced to be in charge of the scouting party today. Another might have killed you first, and inquired later. They are a pack of murderers and thieves, these good men of mine. They have been oppressed by cruel masters; they have felt the heel of the tyrant upon their necks, and their hands are against all men. You cannot blame them."

"But they are good men. They serve me well. They are the man-power; I am the brains; and we divide the profits of our operations equally—half to the man-power, half to the brains." And Capietro grinned.

"And your operations?" asked Stabut.

Capietro scowled, then his face cleared. "You are a comrade, but let me tell you that it is not always safe to be inquisitive."

Stabut shrugged. "Tell me nothing," he said. "I do not care. It is none of my business."

"Good!" exclaimed the Italian. "And why you are here in Africa is none of my business, unless you care to tell me. Let us drink again."

While the conversation that ensued, punctuated by numerous drinks, carefully eschewed personalities, the question of the other's occupation was uppermost in the mind of each; and as the natural effects of the liquor tended to disarm their suspicions and urge confidences, it also stimulated the curiosity of the two men, each of whom was now mellow and genial in his cups.

IT was Capietro who broke first beneath the strain of overpowering curiosity. They were sitting side by side upon a disreputably filthy rug, two empty bottles and a newly opened one before them. "Comrade," he cried, throwing an arm about the shoulders of the Russian affectionately, "I like you. Dominic Capietro does not like many men. This is his motto: 'Like few men and love all women!'" He laughed loudly.

"Let us drink to that," suggested Stabut, joining in the laughter. "Like few men and love all women." That is the idea!"

"I knew the minute I saw you that you were a man after my own heart, comrade," continued Capietro. "And why should there be secrets between comrades?"

"Certainly, why?" agreed Stabut.

"So I shall tell you why I am here with this filthy band of thieving cutthroats. I was a soldier in the Italian army. My regiment was stationed in Eritrea. I was fomenting discord and mutiny, as a good Communist should, when some dog of a Fascist reported me to the commanding officer. I was arrested. Doubtless I should have been shot,

but I escaped and made my way into Abyssinia, where Italians are none too well liked. But when it was known that I was a deserter I was treated well."

"After a while I obtained employment with a powerful ras to train his soldiers along European lines. There I became proficient in Amharic, the official language of the country, and also learned to speak that of the Gallas, who constituted the bulk of the population of the principality of the ras for whom I worked. Naturally, being averse to any form of monarchistic government, I commenced at once to instill the glorious ideals of communism into the breasts of the retainers of the old ras, but once again I was frustrated by an informer, and only by chance did I escape with my life."

"This time, however, I succeeded in enticing a number of men to accompany me. We stole horses and weapons from the ras and rode south where we joined a band of shiftas, or rather, I should say, absorbed them."

"This organized body of raiders and thieves made an excellent force with which to levy tribute upon chance travelers and caravans, but the returns were small, and so we drifted down into this remote country of the Ghensi, where we can ply a lucrative trade in black ivory."

"Black ivory? I never knew there was such a thing." Capietro laughed. "Two-legged ivory," he explained.

S TABUTCH whistled. "Oh," he said, "I think I understand! You are a slave raider. But where is there any market for slaves, other than the wage-slaves of capitalistic countries?"

"You would be surprised, comrade. There are still many markets, including the mandates and protectorates of several highly civilized signatories to World Court conventions aimed at the abolition of human slavery. Yes, I am a slave raider—a rather remarkable vocation for a university graduate and the former editor of a successful newspaper."

"And you prefer this?"

"I have no alternative, and I must live. At least I think I must live—a most common form of rationalization. You see, my newspaper was anti-Fascist. And now, comrade, about yourself—what 'scientific' research is the Soviet government undertaking in Africa?"

"Let us call it anthropology," replied Stabut. "I am looking for a man."

"There are many men in Africa and much nearer the coast than the Ghensi country. You have traveled far inland looking for a man."

"The man I look for I expected to find somewhere south of the Ghensi," replied Stabut.

"Perhaps I can aid you. I know many men, at least by name and reputation, in this part of the world."

Stabut, had he been entirely sober, would have hesitated to give this information to a total stranger, but alcohol induces thoughtless confidences. "I search for an Englishman known as Tarzan of the Apes," he explained.

Capietro's eyes narrowed. "A friend of yours?" he asked.

"I know of no one I would rather see," replied Stabut.

"You say he is here in the Ghensi country?"

"I do not know. None of the natives I have questioned knew his whereabouts."

"His country is far south of the Ghensi," said Capietro.

"Ah, you know of him then?"

"Yes. Who does not? But what business have you with Tarzan of the Apes?"

"I have come from Moscow to kill him," blurted Stabut—and in the same instant he strongly regretted his rash admission.

Capietro relaxed. "I am relieved, comrade," he said. "Why?" demanded the Russian.

"I feared he was a friend of yours," explained the Italian. "In that case we could not be friends; but if you have come to kill him, you shall have nothing but my best wishes and heartiest support."

Stabutchi's relief was almost a thing of substance, so considerable and genuine was it. "You too have a grievance against him?" he asked.

"He is a constant threat against my little operations in black ivory," replied Capietro. "I should feel much safer if he were out of the way."

"Then perhaps you will help me, comrade?"

"I have lost no ape-man," replied Capietro, "and if he leaves me alone, I shall never look for him. That adventure, comrade, you will not have to share with me."

"But you have taken away my means of carrying out my plans. I cannot seek Tarzan without a safari."

"That is right," admitted the raider; "but perhaps the mistake of my men may be rectified. Your equipment and goods are safe. They will be returned to you, and as for men, who better could find them for you than Dominic Capietro, who deals in men?" He grinned. . . .

The safari of Lord Passmore moved northward, skirting the western foothills of the Ghensi Mountains. His stalwart porters marched almost with the precision of well-trained soldiers, in that proper distances were maintained and there were no stragglers. A hundred yards in advance were three askaris, and behind these came Lord Passmore, his gun-bearer, and his headman. At the head and rear of the column of porters was a detachment of askaris—well-armed, efficient-appearing men. The whole entourage suggested an intelligent organization and experienced supervision. Evidence of willingly observed discipline was apparent, a discipline that seemed to be respected by all with the possible exception of Isaza, Lord Passmore's "boy," who was also his cook. Isaza marched where his fancy dictated, laughing and joking with first one and then another of the members of the safari—the personification of the good nature that pervaded the whole party and that was constantly manifested by the laughter and singing of the men. It was evident that Lord Passmore was an experienced African traveler, and that he knew what treatment to accord his followers.

How different, indeed, this well-ordered safari, from another that struggled up the steep slopes of the Ghensi's a few miles to the east! Here the column was strung out for fully a mile, the askaris straggling along among the porters, while the two white men whom they accompanied

forged far ahead; with them were only a single boy and a gun-bearer.

"Geeze," remarked the Gunner, "you sure picked on a lousy racket! I could of stayed home and climbed up the front of the Sherman Hotel if I had of wanted to climb, and always been within a spit of eats and drinks."

"Oh, no, you couldn't," said Lafayette Smith.

"Why not? Who'd of stopped me?"

"Your friends the cops."

"That's right; but don't call 'em my friends—the bums! But whereinef do you think you're going?"

"I think I perceive in this mountain range evidences of upthrust by horizontal compression," replied Lafayette Smith, "and I wish to examine the surface indications more closely than it is possible to do from a distance. Therefore we must go to the mountains, since they will not come to us."

"And what does it get you?" demanded Gunner Patrick. "Not a buck! It's a bum racket."

Lafayette Smith laughed good-naturedly. They were crossing a meadowland through which a mountain stream wound; surrounding it was a forest. "This would make a good camp," he said, "from which to work for a few days. You can hunt, and I'll have a look at the formations in the vicinity. Then we'll move on."

"It's Jake with me," replied the Gunner. "I'm fed up on climbing."

"Suppose you remain with the safari and get camp made," suggested Smith. "I'll go on up a little farther with my boy and see what I can see. It's early yet."

"Oke," assented the Gunner. "I'll park the mob up near them trees. Don't get lost—and say, you better take my protection-guy with you," he added, nodding in the direction of his gun-bearer.

"I'm not going to hunt," replied Smith. "I won't need him."

"Then take my rod, here." The Gunner started to unbuckle his pistol-belt. "You might need it."

"Thanks; I have one," replied Smith, tapping his .32.

"Geeze, you don't call that thing a rod, do you?" demanded the Gunner contemptuously.

"It's all I need. I'm looking for rocks, not trouble. Come on, Obambi." And he motioned his boy to follow him as he started on up the slope toward the higher mountains.

"Geeze," muttered the Gunner, "I seen pipies what ain't as much of a nut as that guy; but," he added, "he's a regular guy, at that. You can't help likin' him." Then he turned his attention to the selection of a camp-site.

Lafayette Smith entered the forest beyond the meadowland, and here the going became more difficult, for the



The keen eyes of the baboon sentinel perceived something moving among the hills below . . . the top of a man's head.

The cast was one that only a practiced hand might have dared. . . . The baboons leaped in at their hereditary foe.

ground rose rapidly, and the underbrush was thick. He fought his way upward, Obambi at his heels; and at last he reached a higher elevation, where the forest growth was much thinner because of the rocky nature of the ground and the absence of top-soil. Here he paused to examine the formation, but only to move on again, this time at right angles to his original direction.

Thus, stopping occasionally to investigate, he moved erratically upward until he achieved the summit of a ridge from which he had a view of miles of rugged mountains in the distance. The cañon before him, separating him from the next ridge, aroused his interest. The formation of the opposite wall, he decided, would bear closer investigation.

Obambi had flung himself to the ground when Smith halted. Obambi appeared exhausted. He was not; he was merely disgusted. To him the bwana was mad, quite mad. Upon no other premise could Obambi explain this senseless climbing, with an occasional pause to examine rocks. Obambi was positive that they might have discovered plenty of rocks at the foot of the mountains had they but searched for them. Moreover, this bwana did not hunt. He supposed all bwanas came to Africa to hunt. This one, being so different, must be mad.

Smith glanced at his boy. It was too bad, he thought, to make Obambi do all this climbing unnecessarily. Certainly there was no way in which the boy might assist him; and seeing him in a constant state of exhaustion reacted unfavorably on Smith. Better by far be alone. He turned to the boy. "Go back to camp, Obambi," he said. "I don't need you here."

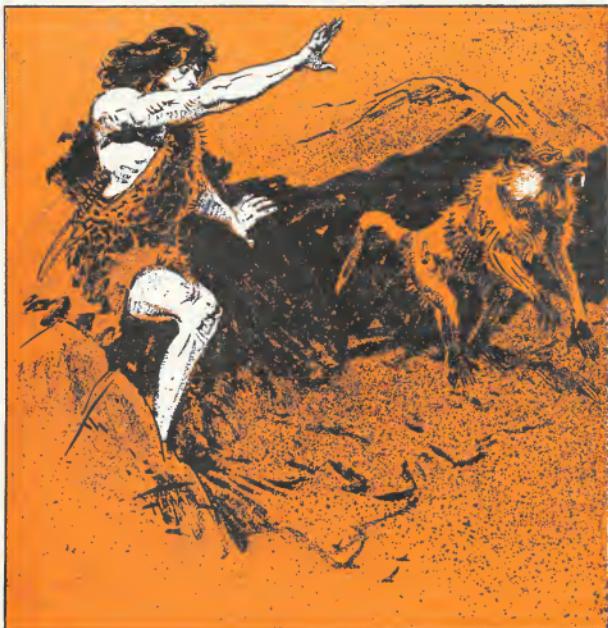
Obambi looked at him in surprise. Now he knew the bwana was very mad. However, it would be much more pleasant in camp than climbing about in these mountains. He rose to his feet. "The bwana does not need me?" he asked. "Perhaps he will need me." Obambi's conscience was already troubling him; he knew that he should not leave his bwana alone.

"No, I shan't need you, Obambi," Smith assured him. "You run along back to camp. I'll come in pretty soon."

"Yes, bwana!" And Obambi turned back gladly.

Lafayette Smith clambered down into the cañon, which was deeper than he had supposed, and then worked his way up the opposite side, which proved even more precipitous than it had appeared from the summit of the ridge. However, he found so much to interest him that he considered it well worth the effort; and so deeply absorbed was he, that he gave no heed to the passage of time.

It was not until he reached the top of the far side of the cañon that he noted the diminishing light that presaged the approach of night. Even then he was not greatly concerned, but he realized that it would be quite dark before he could hope to recross the cañon, and it occurred to him



that by following up the ridge on which he stood, he could reach the head of the cañon where it joined the ridge from which he had descended into it, thus saving him a long, arduous climb and shortening the time, if not the distance, back to camp.

As he trudged upward along the ridge, night fell; but still he kept on, though now he could only grope his way slowly; nor did it occur to him for several hours that he was hopelessly lost.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BABOONS

A NEW day had dawned, and Africa greeted the age-old miracle of Kudu emerging from his lair behind the eastern hills, and smiled. With the exception of a few stragglers, the creatures of the night had vanished, surrendering the world to their diurnal fellows.

Tongani the baboon, perched upon his sentinel rock, surveyed the scene, and perhaps not without appreciation of the beauties; for who are we to say that God touched so countless many of His works with beauty, yet gave to but one of these the power of appreciation?

Below the sentinel fed the tribe of Zugash the king: fierce Tongani shes with young balus clinging to their backs; older young ones playing about, imitating their elders in their constant search for food; surly, vicious bulls; old Zugash himself, the surliest and most vicious.

The keen, close-set eyes of the baboon sentinel, constantly upon the alert down-wind, perceived something moving among the little hills below. It was the top of a man's head. Presently the whole head came into view,



and then the sentinel saw that it belonged to a Tarmangani; but as yet he sounded no alarm, for the Tarmangani was still a long way off and might not be coming in the direction of the tribe. The sentinel would watch yet a little longer and make sure, for it was senseless to interrupt the feeding of the tribe if no danger threatened.

Now the Tarmangani was in full view. Tongani wished that he might have the evidence of his keen nose as well as his eyes; then there would be no doubt, for like many animals, the Tonganis preferred to submit all evidence to their sensitive nostrils before accepting the verdict of their eyes; but the wind was in the wrong direction.

Perhaps, too, Tongani was puzzled, for this was such a Tarmangani as he had never before seen—a Tarmangani who walked almost as naked as Tongani himself. But for the white skin, he might have thought him a Gomangani. This being a Tarmangani, the sentinel looked for the feared thunder-stick; and because he saw none, he waited before giving the alarm. But presently he saw that the creature was coming directly toward the tribe.

The Tarmangani had long been aware of the presence of the baboons, being down-wind from them where their strong scent was borne to his keen nostrils. Also, he had seen the sentinel at almost the same instant that the sentinel had seen him; yet he continued upward, swinging along in easy strides that suggested the power and savage independence of Numa the lion.

Suddenly Tongani the baboon sprang to his feet, uttering a sharp bark; and instantly the tribe awoke to action, swarming up the low cliffs at the foot of which they had been feeding. Here they turned and faced the intruder, barking their defiance as they ran excitedly to and fro.

When they saw that the creature was alone and bore no

thunder-stick, they were more angry than frightened, and they scolded noisily at this interruption of their feeding. Zugash and several of the other larger bulls even clambered part way down the cliff to frighten him away; but in this they only succeeded in increasing their own anger, for the Tarmangani continued upward toward them.

Zugash the king was now beside himself, with rage. He stormed and threatened. "Go away!" he barked. "I am Zugash. I kill!"

And now the stranger halted at the foot of the cliff and surveyed him. "I am Tarzan of the Apes," he said. "Tarzan does not come to the stamping-grounds of the Tongani to kill. He comes as a friend."

Silence fell upon the tribe of Zugash, the silence of stunning surprise. Never before had they heard either Tarmangani or Gomangani speak the language of the ape-people. They had never heard of Tarzan of the Apes, whose country was far to the south; but nevertheless they were impressed by his ability to understand them and speak to them. However, he was a stranger, and so Zugash ordered him away again.

"Tarzan does not wish to remain with the Tongani," replied the ape-man; "he desires only to pass them in peace."

"Go away!" growled Zugash. "I kill. I am Zugash."

Tarzan swung up the cliff quite as easily as had the baboons. It was his answer to Zugash the king. None was there who better knew the strength, the courage, the ferocity of the Tongani than he; yet he knew, too, that he might be in this country for some time, and that if he were to survive, he must establish himself definitely in the minds of all lesser creatures as one who walked without fear and whom it was well to let alone.

Barking furiously, the baboons retreated, and Tarzan

gained the summit of the cliff, where he saw that the shes and balus had scattered, many of them going farther up into the hills, while the adult bulls remained to contest the way.

As Tarzan paused, just beyond the summit of the cliff, he found himself the center of a circle of snarling bulls against the combined strength and ferocity of which he would be helpless. To one other than himself his position might have appeared precarious almost to the point of hopelessness, but Tarzan knew the wild peoples of his savage world too well to expect an unprovoked attack, since killing for the love of killing few besides man, among all the creatures of the world, habitually commit. Neither was he unaware of the danger of his position should a bull, more nervous or suspicious than his fellows, mistake Tarzan's intentions or misinterpret some trivial act or gesture as a threat against the safety of the tribe.

BUT he knew that only an accident might precipitate a charge, and if he gave them no cause to attack him, they would gladly let him proceed upon his way unmolested. However, he had hoped to achieve friendly relations with the Tongani, whose knowledge of the country and its inhabitants might prove of inestimable value to him. Better, too, that the tribe of Zugash be allies than enemies. And so he essayed once more to win their confidence.

"Tell me, Zugash," he said, addressing the bristling king baboon, "if there be many Tarmangani in your country. Tarzan hunts for a bad Tarmangani who has many Gomangani with him. They are bad men. They kill. With thunder-sticks they kill. They will kill the Tongani. Tarzan has come to drive them from your country."

But Zugash only growled and placed the back of his head against the ground in challenge. The other males moved restlessly sideways, their shoulders high, their tails bent in crooked curves. Now some of the younger bulls rested the backs of their heads upon the ground, imitating the challenge of their king.

Zugash, grimacing at Tarzan, raised and lowered his brows rapidly, exposing the white skin about his eyes. Thus did the savage old king seek to turn the heart of his antagonist to water by the frightfulness of his mien; but Tarzan only shrugged indifferently and moved on again as though convinced that the baboons would not accept his overtures of friendship.

Straight toward the challenging bulls that stood in his path he walked, without haste and apparently without concern; but his eyes were narrowed and watchful, his every sense on the alert. One bull, stiff-legged and arrogant, moved grudgingly aside, but another stood his ground. Here, the ape-man knew, would come the real test that should decide the issue.

The two were close now, face to face, when suddenly there burst from the lips of the man-beast a savage growl; and simultaneously he charged. With an answering growl and a catlike leap, the baboon bounded aside, and Tarzan passed beyond the rim of the circle, victor in the game of bluff which is played by every order of living thing sufficiently advanced in the scale of intelligence to possess an imagination.

Seeing that the man-thing did not follow upward after the shes and balus, the bulls contented themselves with barking insults after him and aiming uncomplimentary gestures at his retreating figure; but such were not the acts that menaced safety, and the ape-man ignored them.

Purposely he had turned away from the shes and their young, with the intention of passing around them, rather than precipitate a genuine attack by seeming to threaten them. And thus his way took him to the edge of a shallow

ravine into which, unknown either to Tarzan or the Tongani, a young mother had fled with her tiny balu.

Tarzan was still in full view of the tribe of Zugash, though he alone could see into the ravine, when suddenly three things occurred to shatter the peace that seemed again descending upon the scene. A vagrant air-current wafted upward from the thick verdure below him the scent of Sheeta the leopard; a baboon voiced a scream of terror; and looking down, the ape-man saw the young she, her balu clinging to her back, fleeing upward toward him with savage Sheeta in pursuit.

As Tarzan, reacting instantly to the necessity of the moment, leaped downward with back-thrown spear-hand, the bulls of Zugash raced forward in answer to the note of terror in the voice of the young mother.

From his position above the actors in this sudden tragedy of the wilds, the ape-man could see the leopard over the head of the baboon, and realizing that the beast must reach his victim before succor could arrive, he hurled his spear in the forlorn hope of stopping the carnivore, if only for a moment.

The cast was one that only a practiced hand might have dared attempt, for the danger to the baboon was almost as great as that which threatened the leopard, should the aim of the ape-man not be perfect.

Zugash and his bulls, bounding forward at an awkward gallop, reached the edge of the ravine just in time to see the heavy spear hurtle past the head of the she by a margin of inches only, and bury itself in the breast of Sheeta. Then they were down on the slope, a snarling, snapping pack, and with them went an English viscount, to fall upon a surprised, pain-maddened leopard.

The baboons leaped in to snap at their hereditary foe and leaped out again; and the man-beast, as quick and agile as they, leaped and struck with his hunting-knife, while the frenzied cat lunged this way and that, first at one tormentor and then at another.

Twice those powerful, raking talons reached their mark, and two bulls sprawled torn and bloody upon the ground; but the bronzed hide of the ape-man ever eluded the rage of the wounded cat.

Short was the furious battle, ferocious the growls and snarls of the combatants, prodigious the leaps and bounds of the excited shes hovering in the background; and then Sheeta, rearing high upon his hind feet, struck savagely at Tarzan, and in the same instant plunged to earth dead, slain by the spear-point puncturing his heart.

Instantly the great Tarmangani, who had once been king of the great apes, leaped close and placed a foot upon the carcass of his kill. He raised his face toward Kudu the sun, and from his lips broke the fierce challenge of the bull ape that has killed.

FOR a moment silence fell upon the forest, the mountain and the jungle. Awed, the baboons ceased their restless movement and their din. Tarzan stooped and drew the spear from the quivering body of Sheeta, while the Tongani watched him with a new interest.

Then Zugash approached. This time he did not rest the back of his head against the ground in challenge. "The bulls of the tribe of Zugash are the friends of Tarzan of the Apes," he said.

"Tarzan is the friend of the bulls of the tribe of Zugash," responded the ape-man.

"We have seen a Tarmangani," said Zugash. "He has many Gomangani. There are many thunder-sticks among them. They are bad. Perhaps it is they whom Tarzan seeks."

"Perhaps," admitted the slayer of Sheeta. "Where are they now—these Gomangani?"



The executioners released their holds; she plunged toward the dark waters. Mysterious Chinnereth closed above her head.

"They were camped where the rocks sit upon the mountain-side, as here." He nodded toward the cliff.

"Where?" asked Tarzan again; and this time Zugash motioned along the foothills toward the south.

CHAPTER IX

THE GREAT FISSURE

THE morning sun shone upon the bosom of Chinnereth, glancing from the breeze-born ripples that moved across its surface like vast companies of soldiers passing in review with their countless spears gleaming in the sunlight—a dazzling aspect of beauty.

But to Lady Barbara Collis it connoted something quite different—a shallow splendor concealing cruel and treacherous depths: the real Chinnereth. She shuddered as she approached its shore surrounded by the apostles, preceded by Abraham the son of Abraham and followed by the elders and the villagers. Among them somewhere, she knew, were the six executioners with their great net and their fiber ropes.

How alike were they all to Chinnereth, hiding their cruelty and their treachery beneath a thin veneer of godliness! But there the parallel terminated, for Chinnereth was beautiful. She glanced at the faces of the men nearest her and again she shuddered.

During the long weeks that fate had held her in this land of Midian she had often sought an explanation of the origin of this strange race, and the deductions of her active mind had not deviated greatly from the truth. Noting the

exaggerated racial characteristics of face and form that distinguished them from other people she had seen, she had concluded that they were the inbred descendants of a common ancestor. This theory explained much, but it failed to explain Jezebel, who insisted that she was the child of two of these creatures, and that in so far as she knew, no new strain of blood had ever been injected into the veins of the Midian by intermarrying with other peoples. Yet, somehow, Lady Barbara knew that such a strain must have been introduced, though she could not guess the truth nor the antiquity of the fact.

And their religion! Again she shuddered. What a hideous travesty of the teachings of Christ! A people who had lost entirely the essence of the Master's teachings, while interpolating hideous barbarisms of their own invention. . . .

But now her train of thought was interrupted by the near approach of the procession to the shore of the lake. Here was the flat-topped lava rock of grim suggestiveness and hideous memory. How long it seemed since she had watched the six hurl their screaming victim from its well-worn surface, and yet it had been but yesterday. Now it was her turn. The prophet and the apostles were intoning their senseless gibberish, meant to impress the villagers with their erudition and cloak the real vacuity of their minds.

She was halted now upon the smooth surface of the lava, polished by soft sandals and naked feet through the countless years that these cruel rites had been enacted beside the waters of Chinnereth. Again, it seemed, she heard the screams of yesterday's victim. But Lady Barbara Collis

had not screamed, nor would she. She would rob them of that satisfaction at least.

Abraham the son of Abraham motioned the six to the fore, and they came bearing their net and their cords. At their feet lay the lava fragment that would weight the net and its contents. The prophet raised his hands above his head, and the people knelt. In the forefront of their ranks Lady Barbara saw the golden-haired Jezebel, and her heart was touched, for there was anguish in the beautiful face and tears in the lovely eyes. Here was one, at least, who could harbor love and compassion.

"I have walked with Jehovah," cried Abraham the son of Abraham; and Lady Barbara wondered that he did not have blisters on his feet, so often he walked with Jehovah. The levity of the conceit brought an involuntary smile to her lips, a smile that Abraham noticed. "You smile," he said angrily. "You smile when you should scream and beg for mercy as the others do. Why do you smile?"

"Because I am not afraid," replied Lady Barbara, though she was very much afraid.

"Why art thou not afraid, woman?" demanded the old man.

"Because you are a false prophet, and—"

"Silence!" thundered Abraham the son of Abraham. "Blaspheme no more! Jehovah shall judge you in a moment." He turned to the six. "Into the net with her!"

Quickly they did his bidding, and as they commenced to swing her body to and fro, to gain momentum against the moment that they would release their holds and cast her into the deep lake, she heard the prophet reciting the list of her iniquities that, according to his belief, Jehovah was about to judge in his own peculiar way.

From her pocket the girl extracted the little penknife that was her only weapon and held it firmly in one hand, the blade open and ready for the work she intended it to do. And what work was that? Surely, she could not hope to inflict instant death upon herself with that inadequate weapon! Yet in the last stages of fear induced by utter helplessness and hopelessness one may attempt anything, even the impossible.

Now they were swinging her far out over Chinnereth. The apostles and the elders were intoning their weird chant in voices excited to frenzy by the imminence of death.

Suddenly came the word from Abraham the son of Abraham. Lady Barbara caught her breath, in a last frightened gasp. The six executioners released their holds. A loud cry arose from the huddled villagers,—the scream of a woman,—and as she plunged toward the dark waters Lady Barbara knew that it was the voice of Jezebel crying out in the anguish of sorrow. Then mysterious Chinnereth closed above her head. . . .

At that very moment Lafayette Smith, A. M., Ph. D., A. Sc. D., was stumbling along a rocky mountain-side that walled the great crater of the land of Midian and Chinnereth. He was no more aware of the tragedy being enacted upon the opposite side of that stupendous wall than of the fact that he was moving directly away from the camp he was seeking. Had there been anyone there to tell him, and had they told him, that he was hopelessly lost, he would have been inclined to dispute the statement, so positive was he that he was taking a shortcut to camp, which he imagined was but a little distance ahead.

Although he had been without supper and breakfast, hunger had not as yet caused him any annoyance; partly because he had had some chocolate with him, which had materially assisted in allaying its pangs, and partially through his interest in the geologic formations that held the attention of his scholarly mind to the exclusion of such

material considerations as hunger, thirst and bodily comfort. Even the question of personal safety was relegated to the oblivion that usually engulfed all practical issues when Lafayette Smith was immersed in the pleasant waters of research.

Consequently he was unaware of the proximity of a tawny body; nor did the fixed and penetrating gaze of a pair of cruel yellow-green eyes penetrate the armor of his preoccupation to disturb that sixth sense that is popularly supposed to warn us of unseen danger. Yet even had any premonition of threat to his life or safety disturbed him, he doubtless would have ignored it, safe in the consciousness that he was adequately protected by the possession of his .32 caliber nickel-plated pistol.

MOVING northward along the lower slopes of a conical mountain, the mind of the geologist became more and more engrossed in the rocky story that Nature had written upon the landscape—a story so thrilling that even thoughts of camp were forgotten; and as he made his way farther and farther from camp, a great lion stalked in his wake.

What hidden urge prompted Numa thus to follow the man-thing perhaps the great cat himself could not have guessed. He was not hungry, for he had but recently finished a kill; nor was he a man-eater, though a properly balanced combination of circumstances might easily find the scales tipped in that direction by hunger, inevitable and oft-recurring. It may have been only curiosity, or again some motive akin to that playfulness which is inherent in all cats.

For an hour Numa followed the man—an hour of intense interest for both of them, an hour that would have been replete with far greater interest for the man, if less pleasurable, had he shared with Numa the knowledge of their propinquity. Then the man halted before a narrow vertical cleft in the rocky escarpment towering above him. Here was an interesting entry in the book of Nature! What titanic force had thus rent the solid rock of this mighty mountain? It had its own peculiar significance: but what was it? Perhaps elsewhere on the face of the mountain, which here became precipitous, there would be other evidence to point the way to a solution. Lafayette Smith looked up at the face of the cliff towering above him; he looked ahead in the direction he had been going, and then he looked back in the direction from which he had come—and saw the lion.

For a long moment the two stared at one another. Surprise and interest were the most definitely registered of the emotions that the discovery engendered in the mind of the man. Suspicion and irritability were aroused in Numa.

"Most interesting," thought Lafayette Smith. "A truly splendid specimen!" But his interest in lions was purely academic, and his thoughts quickly reverted to the more important phenomenon of the crack in the mountain, which now again claimed his undivided attention. From which it may be inferred that Lafayette Smith was either an inordinately courageous man or a fool. Neither assumption, however, would be wholly correct, especially the latter. The truth of the matter is that Lafayette Smith suffered from inexperience and impracticality. While he knew that a lion was, *per se*, a threat to longevity, he saw no reason why this lion should attack him. He, Lafayette Smith, had done nothing to offend this or any other lion; he was attending to his own affairs, and like the gentleman he was, he expected others, including lions, to be equally considerate. Furthermore, he had a childlike faith in the infallibility of his nickel-plated revolver should worse develop into worst. Therefore he ignored Numa and returned to contemplation of the intriguing crack.

It was several feet wide and was apparent as far up the face of the cliff as he could see. Also there was every indication that it continued far below the present surface of the ground, but had been filled by débris brought down by erosion from above. How far into the mountain it extended he could not guess; but he hoped that it ran back, and was open, for a great distance—in which event it would offer a most unique means for studying the origin of this mountain massif.

Therefore, with this thought uppermost in his mind, and the lion already crowded into the dim background of his consciousness, he entered the narrow opening to the intriguing fissure. Here he discovered that the cleft curved gradually to the left and that it extended upward to the surface, where it was considerably wider than at the bottom, thus affording both light and air for the interior.

Thrilled with excitement and glowing with pride in his discovery, Lafayette clambered inward over the fallen rocks that littered the floor of the fissure, intent now on exploring the opening to its full extent, and then working back slowly to the entrance in a more leisurely manner—at which time he would make a minute examination of whatever geological record Nature had imprinted upon the walls of this majestic corridor. Hunger, thirst, camp and the lion were all forgotten.

Numa, however, was no geologist. The great cleft aroused no palpable enthusiasm within his broad breast. It did not cause him to forget anything, and it intrigued his interest only to the extent of causing him to speculate on why the man-thing had entered it. Having noted the indifferent attitude of the man, his lack of haste, Numa could not attribute his disappearance within the maw of the fissure to flight, of which it bore not a single earmark; and it may be recorded here that Numa was an expert on flight. All of his life things had been fleeing from him.

It had always seemed to Numa an unfair provision of Nature that things should so almost inevitably seek to escape him, especially those things he most coveted. There were, for example, Pacco the zebra and Wappi the antelope, the tenderest and most delicious of his particular weaknesses, and at the same time the fleetest. It would have been much simpler all around had Kota the tortoise been endowed with the speed of Pacco, and Pacco with the torpidity of Kota.

But in this instance there was nothing to indicate that the man-thing was fleeing him. Perhaps, then, there was treachery afoot. Numa bristled. Very cautiously he approached the fissure into which his quarry had disappeared. Numa was beginning to think of Lafayette Smith in terms of food, now, since his long stalking had commenced to arouse within his belly the first faint suggestion of hunger. He approached the cleft and looked in.

The Tarmangani was not in sight. Numa was not pleased, and he evidenced his displeasure by an angry growl.

A hundred yards within the fissure Lafayette Smith heard the growl and halted abruptly. "That damn' lion!" he ejaculated. "I'd forgotten all about him." It now occurred to him that this might be the beast's lair—a most unhappy *contretemps*, if true. A realization of his predicament at last supplanted the geologic reveries that had filled his mind. But what to do? Suddenly his faith in his trusty .32 faltered. As he recalled the appearance of the great beast, the weapon seemed less infallible; yet it still gave him a certain sense of assurance as his fingers caressed its grip.

He determined that it would not be wise to retrace his steps toward the entrance at this time.

Of course the lion might not have entered the fissure, might not even be harboring any intention of so doing. On the other hand, he might, in which event a return toward the opening could prove embarrassing, if not disastrous. Perhaps, if he waited awhile, the lion would go away; and in the meantime, he decided, it would be discreet to go still farther along the cleft, as the lion, if it entered at all, might conceivably not proceed to the uttermost depths of the corridor. Further, there was the chance that he would find some sort of sanctuary farther in—a cave, a ledge to which he could climb, a miracle. Lafayette Smith was open to anything by this time.

And so he scrambled on, tearing his clothes and his flesh as well on sharp fragments of tumbled rock, going deeper into this remarkable corridor that seemed endless. In view of what might be behind him, he hoped that it was endless. He had shuddered regularly to the oft-recurring expectation of running into a blank wall just beyond! He pictured that event. With his back to the rocky end of the *cul-de-sac*, he would face back down the corridor, his pistol in his hand. Presently the lion would appear and discover him.

At this point he had some difficulty in constructing the scene, because he did not know just what the lion would do. Lafayette had not had sufficient experience of wild animals to permit him to pose as an authority on the subject. To be sure, upon another occasion, while engaged in field work, he had been chased by a cow. Yet this experience had not been conclusive—for the excellent reason that Lafayette had attained a fence two jumps ahead of the cow.

Forging grimly ahead over the roughly tumbled fragments, casting an occasional glance backward, he again pictured his last stand with his back against the corridor's rocky end. The lion was creeping slowly toward him, but Lafayette was waiting until there should be no chance of a miss. He was cool; his hand was steady as he took careful aim. The fact that he had never discharged his .32 troubled him but little, since he harbored the popular subconscious conviction that a firearm pointed in the general direction of an animate object becomes a deadly weapon.



Smith clambered down into the cañon, and then up the opposite side.

Smith had been fleeing from him.

The Triumph of Tarzan

However, in this mental picture he took careful aim—the fact that he was utilizing the front sight only giving him no concern. In imagination he pulled the trigger; the lion staggered and almost fell. It required a second shot to finish the lion of the geologist's fancy; as he sank to the ground, Lafayette breathed a genuine sigh of relief. Withdrawing a handkerchief from his pocket, he mopped the perspiration from his forehead, smiling a little as he realized the pitch of excitement to which he had aroused himself. Doubtless the lion had already forgotten him!

He was facing back in the direction from which he had come as this satisfying conclusion passed through his mind; and then, a hundred feet away, where the corridor passed from view around a curve, the lion appeared. . . .

The Gunner was perturbed. It was morning, and Lafayette Smith was still missing. They had searched for him until late the previous night, and now they were setting forth again. Ogonyo the headman, acting under instructions from the Gunner, had divided the party into pairs, and with the exception of four men left to guard the camp, these were to search in different directions, combing the country carefully for trace of the missing man.

Danny had selected Obambi as his companion, a fact which irked the black boy considerably, as he had been the target for a great deal of angry vituperation ever since Danny had discovered, the afternoon before, that he had left Smith alone in the mountains.

"It don't make no difference what he told you, you punk!" the Gunner assured him. "You didn't have no business leavin' him out there alone. Now I'm goin' to take you for a walk, and if we don't find Lafayette, you ain't never comin' back."

"Yes, bwana," replied Obambi, who had not even a crude idea of what the white man was talking about. One thing, however, pleased him immensely, and that was that the bwana insisted on carrying his own gun, leaving nothing for Obambi to carry but a light lunch and two fifty-round drums of ammunition.

The Gunner, in attempting to determine the probable route that Smith would have followed in his search for camp, reasoned in accordance with what he assumed he would have done under like circumstances, and knowing that Smith had been last seen well above the camp and a little to the north of it, he decided to search in a northerly direction along the foothills. The day was hot, and by noon the Gunner was tired, sweating and disgusted.

"Geeze," he grumbled, "I've walked my legs off, and I ain't been no further than from the Loop to Cicero!"

"Yes, bwana," agreed Obambi.

"Shut up!" growled the Gunner.

They were sitting beneath the shade of a tree on a hillside, resting and eating their lunch. A short distance below them, the hillside dropped sheer in a fifty-foot cliff, a fact that was not apparent from where they sat, any more than was the palisaded village at the cliff's base. . . . Nor did they see the man squatting by a bush at the very brink of the cliff, gazing upon the village below.

Here, the watcher believed, was the man he sought; but he wished to make sure, which might require days of watching. Time, however, meant little or nothing to Tarzan—no more than it did to any other jungle beast. He would come back often to this vantage-spot and watch. Sooner or later he would discover the truth or falsity of his suspicion that one of the white men he saw in the village below was the slave raider for whom he had come north. And so, like a great lion, the ape-man crouched, watching his quarry.

In the ensuing chapters (in the next, the December, issue) Tarzan achieves specially exciting exploits in defense of his jungle kingdom.



The Prima Donna

SAME play again. Left half off right tackle." Coach Vail whipped out the words in a clipped monotone to the eleven men grouped around him.

"You know your assignments. Now get in there and take those scrubs out of the play. Block 'em off—see? If a scrub gets near enough to the runner to tag him, it's somebody's fault. That means you too, Jessup. You're in there to block. Let's see you do it."

From the huddle, Treve Jessup trotted to his position and tried to focus his mind on the job ahead of him. He knew what was expected of him. He was the "blocking half." He was to head the interference—to clear a way for the man carrying the ball.

"One—two—three—hike!" he chanted with the rest of the team who formed the Olympia varsity.

A shift—and the play broke into action. The scrub end was taken out, and the tackle boxed in. Through the yawning hole Treve plunged, with Park, the ball-carrier, close behind. Two big defensive backs were charging toward him. Treve hesitated a moment. And in that split second of indecision, the first of the two backs leaped ahead, hurled himself across Treve's knees, and the two went down together. The other back caught Park unprotected, and stopped him standing up.

Vail came forging through the tangle of players. His mouth was grim, and his eyes somber with anger.

"That was the most pitiful exhibition I ever saw on a football field," he gritted out. "You, Jessup—you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You were in there to block. Instead you were taken out yourself—by a scrub, a sophomore."

Vail stood for a moment glaring at the offending boy. The other players had picked themselves up, and stood about in an embarrassed silence.



The author of "The Ball Toter" and of "Training-table Blues" is at his best in this lively story.

"That was the most pitiful exhibition I ever saw on a football field," the coach gritted out.

By

W. F. G. THACHER

Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean

"So you're the great Treve Jessup!" Vail continued. "The all-Conference back I've heard so much about. I suppose you think that because you can grab a pass, or sail along behind a lot of interference and score a touchdown, you're a star football-player."

Treve stood speechless, staring at the irate coach.

"A ball-toter, are you? A *prima donna*! Now get this: We're going to struggle along without any stars at Olympia this year. Ball-totters come cheap right now. A man that plays football for me has to block—first, last, and all the time—or get off the team."

"You take right half," he finished, turning to McBride, the big sophomore who had taken Treve out of the last play. "You, Jessup—go sit on the bench and think it over."

Treve stumbled across the field; but instead of taking a place on the bench, he passed on into the locker-room, tore off his clothing and stepped under the shower. A great seething confusion of anger and humiliation had pulsed and throbbed in his head. His one impulse was to get away—away from football, from Vail, from everybody. He was through, he told himself—through with football, with college, with everything.

The battered roadster in which he had driven to Olympia for early practice just two days ago stood by the curb near the stadium. His way took him through Culpepper Lane, where most of the sorority houses were situated. From the Phi Zeta house a voice hailed him joyously. "Treve! Trevie Jessup! He-lo!"

A girl, her bright hair swathed in some turban-like arrangement, waved a bare arm from an upper window. A moment later she was shaking hands with him.

"Gee, Treve, but I'm tickled to see you. S'prised you, didn't I? I'm on the Phi Zeta clean-up committee, you

see. How do you like my costume? But gee, it's great to be back. How are you, anyway? Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Sure I am, Sadie. You're looking great, too. Have a good summer?"

"Sure did. With the General in Hawaii most of the time. I was in the water so much I'm positively amphibious. But say, that's a question to ask me, after all the letters I wrote you. As a correspondent, Treve Jessup, I'd say you're a great halfback. How does the team look, anyway? How's the new coach? Like him?"

"Well, the fact is, Sadie, I—" He broke off, failing to find words to tell what had taken place.

"Treve Jessup—let me look at you." She slid into the seat beside him, and looked into his eyes.

"Treve, there's something the matter. Come through, now, and tell me what it is."

"Well, you see, Sadie, the coach—Vail and I—had a sort of run-in today; and I—well, I'm through, that's all."

"Through? Through with football? *Treve!*"

"That's the story."

The girl's eyes grew wide, and her breathing deepened.

"Treve, either you're stringing me, or you've gone completely squirrelly. Now give it to me straight."

Under the pressure of the girl's insistence, Treve's wounded pride and mortification broke forth in a quick torrent of words.

"Vail thought he could make a blocking half out of me, and it didn't work—that's all. I can't say I like the job. I've always been a ball-toter, you know. But I did the best I knew how. And just because I fell down on one play, he bawled me out before the whole team."

He brooded for a moment in sullen silence.

"Everything would have been O. K. if Porter hadn't left. He was going to get me into West Point next year, too, you know. Now I suppose that's off. Anyway, I'm not going to take a calling-down like that from Vail or any man. That's why I said I was through."

Sadie's voice was strange and tense:

"So you're through, are you? Through with football—and Olympia—and everything. I suppose you're through with me, too. I'm just a part of it all."

"Oh, Sadie—I didn't mean it that way."

The color had mounted to her cheeks.

"Listen to me, Treve: You're acting like a perfect baby. What was it the coach called you—a *prima donna*? Well, if a *prima donna* acts like a spoiled child, then he was right. You're throwing down the college—that's what you're doing—and the team. You're the best football player out there, and you know it. And now you're talking about quitting."

Treve started to speak, but the girl cut him short.

"Now, get this, Treve: You and I've been pretty good friends—and perhaps a little bit more. But when you're through with the team and with college, you're through with me too—if that makes any difference to you."

"Oh, cut that, Sadie. You know darned well that—"

"I don't know anything about it. But the General—my daddy—is a soldier. And a man that quits—well, it's just too bad for him—that's all. But you don't mean it, Treve—you *can't* mean it."

Under the lash of Sadie's words the boy's hurt pride had flared again into bitterness. But he failed to notice the catch in her voice and the pain that lay behind the anger in her eyes.

"I'll show you whether I mean it or not," he burst out. "You were all for me when I was a—big shot around here. And now—"

He set his motor in motion, and released the brake.

"Treve—you're not going away like this!"



Treve went through that tackler just as if no one were there; and a second later he had crossed the last white stripe.

He turned, looked at her a moment—then reached across her body and opened the door. A moment later he caught a glimpse of her in the rear-view mirror. She was standing on the curb, watching his car, and her hands were clasped together at her throat. . . .

In less than half an hour Treve had packed a bag, drawn a small balance from the bank and was swiftly adding to the miles that lay between him and Olympia.

After forty-eight hours of almost continuous driving he reached San Francisco. He knew no one in the city. Parking in front of the first hotel he came to, he went inside to register. . . . When he came out, his car was gone, and with it his bag. The desk-clerk expressed regret, but held out small hope of recovery.

Tired to the point of exhaustion, dejected, and almost penniless, Treve walked along dispiritedly until he found himself on Market Street. He hesitated before a telegraph office. He could wire home, he knew, and solicit funds to carry him back, or to the manager of athletics at Olympia. They thought enough of him to pay for his return, probably. But to go crawling back—

The odors from a near-by café proved irresistible; he went inside and perched on a stool at the counter. Next to him sat a trim khaki-clad figure, with chevrons on his sleeve. He passed Treve the sugar for his coffee, and smiled at him in a friendly fashion.

Treve acted on a sudden impulse.

"You're in the army, aren't you?" he asked.

"Sure. My outfit's stationed at the Presidio. Why?"

"Why—I thought I might like to enlist. How do you go about it?"

"Nothing to it, fellow. Come along with me—I'll show you. They'll ask you a lot of questions and give you a physical examination. You don't look like an invalid." He grinned. "It's a good graft, too. Kinda hard going at first. But watch your step, and after while, if you're any good, you'll be a non-com. After that it's easy."

Three days later Private James Trevis (that was the name he had given) was sitting on the edge of a cot in the barracks at the Presidio of San Francisco.

There had been but one hitch in the routine of enlistment. When the sergeant who filled out his papers came

to the line headed by "age," he had said: "You're twenty-one, I suppose?" And Treve had had wit enough to answer: "Yes." As a matter of fact, he lacked two months of reaching his majority.

Somebody down at the other end of the room blared out "Attention!"—and all the soldiers jumped to their feet and stiffened to immobility.

An officer had entered. Behind him was a towering sergeant with face like that of a gorilla.

"At ease," said the officer. "Listen, men: We're looking for football-players for the company team. We've got a bunch out there now, but we want more. We want men that've had some experience. You'll get out of a lot of drill and fatigue duty, and have some trips to boot. Any of you new men ever play?"

A stripling standing next to Treve piped up: "I have, sir."

The officer stalked toward him, and looked him over quickly.

"Too light," he pronounced. "Nobody need apply that weighs under a hundred and seventy."

His eye fell on Treve.

"How about you, soldier? Ever play any football?"

"A little—sir," answered Treve without enthusiasm.

"How about it, Sergeant?"

"We moight use him—on the third team, perhaps," grinned the giant.

"Well, take his name—and tell him where and when to report."

And so it came about that Treve Jessup—alias James Trevis—found himself, next afternoon, out on a dusty field with a bunch of nondescript rough-necks, being drilled in the rudiments of football. But he could see no way out of it. He was in the army now.

Before long the sergeant in charge—whose name proved to be Mahaffey—sent two elevens and a group of substitutes to one end of the field for signal drill, and called the rest of the recruits around him.

"Now, ye're new min," he growled at them, his face drawn into a ferocious scowl, "and a lousy-lookin' bunch if I ever seen wan. But I'm goin' to make football-players outa yez, or br-reak yez in pieces, wan aftur anither.

Fir-rst I want to know what yez kin do—if anythin'. Are yez linesmen, or backs—or what? Here—all of yez that kin play on the line step over here—and the backs over there."

The half-dozen that grouped themselves around Treve were either light and stringy, or fat and bulky. Mahaffey looked them over with withering scorn.

"That's what I get to make a back-field outa! An' we lookin' fer a real blockin' half—a bird that's hard-rock and cast-iron. I've got a bunch of lady-birds over there that kin run and kick and pass an' the loike av that. But what good are they without a rock-crushin', blockin' half-back to blast a way for them?"

Suddenly Mahaffey lunged forward and seized Treve by the slack of his tunic.

"Come out here," he bellowed. "Ye're the least on-likely wan av this bunch. Ye're big enough—but ye're soft and womanish. Niver moind—we'll take that out of yez—and we'll begin it roight now. —Shtand back there, the rest of yez. —Now ye're runnin' ahead av the man that's packin' the ball, to clear a way fer 'im—see? An' I'm comin' through to shtop him. It's up to yez to put me out—to block me. Anny way but by usin' yer hands. Get back there twenty paces, and we'll try out."

Sullenly Treve trotted back, and turned arround.

"Come on, now. Tear into me—*har-r-r-d.*"

The two started at the same time. At the proper distance Treve sprang, and threw himself across Mahaffey's huge body.

He bounced back as if he had hurled himself against a concrete pillar.

"A-g-g-h-h!" growled the sergeant. "That wouldn't of shtopped a baby-carriage. Get up, now, and thry ut ag'in! Put some fer-ocity into it, yez milk-fed baby."

The second attempt was little better than the first.

"Ag'in, now. *Dr-rive!* Come on, now, or I'll break yez in two, ye pulin' rabbit."

Somewhere down in Treve's being a little flame began to burn—a flame kindled of desperation and outrage and a desire for retaliation. On his next try he caught Mahaffey across the knees and sent him reeling.

"Ah-hah!" roared the giant gleefully. "So yez got a few guts in yez afther all! Come on, now—ye'll play blockin' half on the secound team, and we'll see what yez kin do in a real scrimmage."

FOR a half hour that seemed an endless agony Treve was sent through scrimmages that made a practice session at Olympia look like a game of tag. On nearly every play he was the spearhead of the interference. Time after time he hurled his bruised and tortured body against Mahaffey's iron bulk.

But the little flame that had sprung into life was burning steadily now. He didn't know how exhausted he was—how beaten and battered by the punishment he was taking. One thought possessed him—to take Mahaffey out of the play—to *block!* Even when the officer ordered them to stop, he stood there crouched and tense, waiting for the signal. . . .

For two weeks Treve's life was a pitiless routine made up of drill in the mornings and football in the afternoon.

But after the first week things began to look brighter. He was still sore and bruised; but his body was responding now to the extraordinary demands made upon it. He found himself putting a little extra drive and snap in his charges—even taking a grim delight in the savagery of the battle.

It was no longer an uneven conflict, either—the feud between Mahaffey and himself. More than once he had the satisfaction of leaving the giant sergeant on the ground while he—Treve—went on with the interference.

Then he was advanced to the first team—still as blocking half. Never once had he been given a chance to run with the ball. But he had learned how to block.

If, during this period, he thought of Olympia at all,—or of Sadie,—it was as of something remote and unreal, almost as of another life.

ON a Sunday afternoon, almost exactly two weeks after Treve had made his appearance at the Presidio, a game was scheduled, with a team from the U. S. battleship *Massachusetts* as the opponent. And what Treve did that afternoon is still something of a legend. Heading the interference on nearly every play off tackle and around the ends, he was largely responsible for the great gaps in the Navy line through which the Army galloped for five touchdowns. And late in the fourth quarter he intercepted a forward pass, and with the ball tucked familiarly under his arm, dodged, sidestepped, and outran half the Navy team to add a sixth touchdown to the score.

As he trotted off the field by the side of the jubilant Mahaffey, he noticed a group of officers standing on the lines. One, a tall, distinguished-looking man on whose shoulders gleamed the gold of a general's eagles, looked at him sharply, then turned as if to ask a question of the colonel at his side.

Treve had hardly dressed after his shower when a sergeant announced that Private Trevis was to report at headquarters at once. Wonderingly he walked quickly down the company street and across the parade ground. A few minutes later he found himself saluting the officer whom he had observed not half an hour before.

The General put him at ease and offered him a cigarette.

"That was a great game you played today," he said. "Played quite a lot of football, haven't you?"

"Yes sir—quite a lot."

"Would you mind telling me where?"

"Why—I played three years at Olympia—one year on the freshman team, and two on the 'varsity."

"H-m-m. How did it come that you didn't finish? You had another year to play, didn't you?"

"Yes sir. You see—they got a new coach—and he and I didn't hit it off."

"So you quit and enlisted in the army, eh?"

"Well, I've always wanted to go to West Point. Porter—he was coach up to this year—promised me he'd get me in, when I finished at Olympia."

"You'd been a star under Porter—and he'd spoiled you. When the new coach wanted you to learn how to block, you got mad and quit. Is that about it?"

Treve stared incredulously at the General, as the older man went on: "They don't care much for quitters at West Point—or in the army, either. A quitter is worse than—a prima donna."

"But—but, sir—how did you know?"

"This letter, here," the General said casually. "It's from a student at Olympia—a girl. She told me about it. She's considerably upset about the whole business."

Treve could feel the blood pouring into his face.

"Then you're—you're—"

"General Given—Sadie's father, Treve."

From the pages of Sadie's letter there was wafted a hint of a familiar perfume. With it there swept back over him—vivid and glowing—the thoughts and pictures that had all seemed so distant and dream-like during the past few weeks—of Olympia, the team, the campus—and of Sadie. He dropped into a chair and buried his face in his hands. There was sympathy and understanding in the eyes of the General as he looked at the stricken boy.

"Don't let it get the better of you, Treve," he said. "I've had a lot to do with men in my life—and boys. We

all make mistakes. But that isn't what matters. It's what you do about it afterward that counts."

"I'd do anything, General."

"Would you like to go back to Olympia—and play football?"

"I'd give anything to do that. But how can I? I'm in the army, sir."

"That's right, Treve. But the army isn't a prison, you know. In fact, I've already taken some steps. As soon as I identified you, here, I wired your parents, and found that you were still under twenty-one. They refuse to give their consent to your enlistment. That makes it easy. Go back to your barracks and get your stuff together. The order should be there before you're packed up. I'll lend you enough money for the trip."

"Gee, General, but you're—you're great."

"Forget it, Treve. I'm not doing this altogether for you, you know."

He held out his hand, and Treve grasped it.

"There's one other thing," Treve spoke hesitatingly. "It's about Sadie. Would you mind not telling her—about my coming back?"

The General hesitated a moment.

"You see, Treve—I don't know that I ought to tell you this; it was told to me in confidence. But I know about what Sadie said to you before you left. She—she didn't mean all she said. She could see your side of it, too. But she thought if you cared enough, you would—stick it out."

Treve waited until he could control his voice. "I owe—everything—to Sadie and to you, sir," he said.

UPON Treve's arrival at Olympia, he went straight to Vail's office. It was early in the afternoon, and the coach happened to be alone.

"Coach," Treve began, "I'm Jessup—Treve Jessup. I ran out on you a couple of weeks ago. I—"

"I haven't forgotten, Jessup."

"I know it was a rotten thing to do, Coach—rotten. I'm ashamed of myself. But I'm back—I'm going to enter college—and I want to know if I can turn out with the team again."

The coach sat drumming on the desk before him with his stubby fingers. From under the bushy brows his eyes, shrewd with the wisdom of long experience, looked the boy over. As if coming to a quick decision, he leaned forward and spoke:

"Sit down, Jessup. I called you down pretty hard that afternoon when you—quit. I had a reason for it. I was a new man here, you know. I'm not saying anything against Porter. But from what I gather, he was pretty soft, and he played favorites. You were one of them."

"You know what our schedule is like. Some of our hardest games come early in the season. Webster this Saturday—then Parthenon the week after—and State, our biggest game, after that. I had to establish myself—and do it quick. I don't make a practice of bawling out individuals before their teammates. But it seemed the only thing to do at the time."

As Treve listened, a smile broke over his face.

"Gee, Coach—if you call that a bawling-out! Why, what I've taken the last two weeks would make you sound like a Sunday-school teacher."

In a few words he sketched his recent experiences.

"All that I want now is a chance to play football for Olympia. Do I get it?"

"Sure," Vail answered heartily. "We need you out there. And we start from scratch, Jessup. No old scores to even up."

With relief and joy in his heart, Treve left the building and hurried toward the Phi Zeta house.

IN the first game of the season Olympia lost to Webster, thirteen to nothing. The team looked very green and ragged. Their defense was fairly strong, with a powerful but unseasoned line; but their attack was pitifully weak. They used nothing but conventional plays, with Thorwald, a rugged fullback, carrying the ball on the line attack, and Park on the plays directed at the ends. Park was fast and shifty—too fast, in fact, for the interference, which formed slowly, and lacked timing and cohesion.

The campus took the defeat philosophically, and the critics expressed no surprise. With a new coach and a green team, little more was to be looked for.

As was to be expected, Treve sat on the bench throughout the entire game. Even if he had had time to learn the signals, he could hardly have fitted into the backfield combinations which Vail had developed.

The game with Parthenon the following Saturday, however, was a shocking disappointment. Parthenon was unleashed nearly twenty pounds to the man; but they unleashed a passing attack in the first quarter that yielded two scores before Olympia could find a way to stop it. After that, the long-distance kicking of a midget punter kept the ball in Olympia's territory most of the time.

In the second half Vail put Treve in. Heading the interference, he paved the way for an advance that resulted in Olympia's one touchdown.

It was the first time in her long athletic history that Olympia had been defeated by so ignominious an opponent, and a storm of criticism was the result. Both on the campus and in that larger world of Olympian alumni and friends, Vail and his methods were flayed unmercifully, and an overwhelming victory by State was predicted.

With two weeks in which to prepare for the crucial struggle, Coach Vail set doggedly to work to weld the inadequate material at his command into some sort of machine. Behind closed gates the squad was put through long and merciless practice sessions that lasted until it was too dark to see to handle the ball. Men were tried out in new positions; new plays were introduced; and the whole emphasis was shifted from the strategy of defense to that of attack.

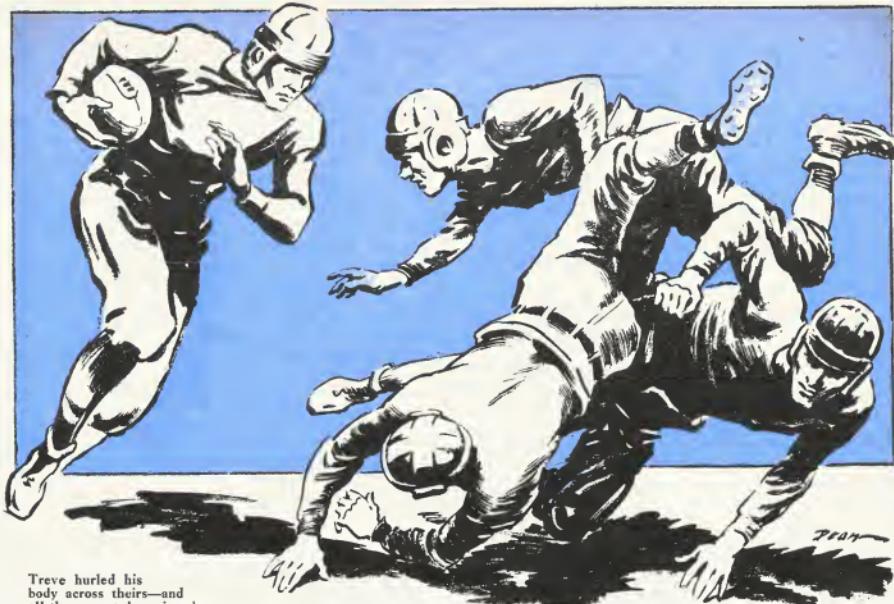
So far as the public was concerned, the result was a foregone conclusion. But it was the Big Game just the same—the Homecoming Game for former students and supporters of the college; and there was no lack of enthusiasm as the day drew near.

To Treve, seasoned campaigner that he was, the game brought a nervous tautness that he had never experienced before. In a way that was entirely new to him he was conscious of a responsibility for the showing of the team. He and Thorwald at full, and a couple of forwards, were the only veterans on the first-string line-up. He himself was field captain and signal-caller. Vail was relying on him to direct the strategy of the game.

And then—Sadie was to be there, and with her the General, her father—the man to whom he owed so great a debt of gratitude.

FROM the door of the locker-room Treve could look across the great bowl—already filled by the throng attracted by the dramatic spectacle. Sadie had told him where her seats were located. He tried to make out the section numbers. Then he caught sight of the General's tall form, distinguishable by his military attire. And the feminine figure by his side must be Sadie. He could just discern the small oval of her face, and the color of the flower that she wore in honor of Olympia. A swift rush of emotion quickened the beat of his heart. . . .

Ten minutes later he found himself out on the field, his team-mates deployed beside him, ready for the kick-



Treve hurled his body across theirs—and all three went down in a heap.

off. State had won the toss, and elected to receive. Park was placing the ball, and Thorwald moving backward.

"Ready, State?"

"Ready, Olympia?"

There was a moment of breathless suspense. Then the sharp blast of a whistle, answered by a great roar from the stands, as Thorwald ran forward and sent the ball in a high arc toward the State goal-line.

From the twenty-five-yard line State started an aggressive attack, with swift slashes at tackle, interspersed by perfectly timed passes. Olympia, nervous and overeager, was penalized twice in succession for offside play. Then State shook a runner loose around left end, and he covered fifteen yards before Park, coming up from the safety's position, brought him down.

The ball rested on Olympia's fourteen-yard line, and the State rooters, thousands strong, were already calling for a touchdown, while the cohorts of Olympia, from the other side of the field, were chanting the dirge-like, "Hold 'em, Olympia!"

Treve called for time out, in order to break the rhythm of State's advance. But on the first play State looped a long pass diagonally into unprotected territory—the end caught it, and dashed over the goal-line with no one near him.

In less than five minutes of play, State had scored a touchdown and kicked a goal! The air rocked with the exultation of State's supporters. And the wise boys up in the press box were saying to each other that it was only a question of the size of the score....

State's kick-off went over the goal-line, and Olympia lined up on her twenty. Thorwald through guard for three yards. The next play was a cutback between guard and tackle, with Park taking the ball. Treve helped the end box in the tackle—then swung himself into the mas-

sive State fullback, who was backing up the line. Dashboarding through the opening, Park covered twenty yards before he was run out of bounds.

Thorwald was held at center for no gain. On the cutback play, Park juggled the ball and was caught from behind for a loss. A short pass was knocked down, and Olympia was forced to kick.

Again State started their offensive. It wasn't so easy this time. They made their first down by inches. A pass brought them close to midfield. Olympia held there, and both sides resorted to a punting game, with honors fairly even, but with the ball always in Olympian territory.

About halfway through the second quarter one of Thorwald's punts was partially blocked, and went out of bounds for very little gain. State took the ball on Olympia's twenty-five. Twice they were held for short gains, and a pass was grounded. Another pass seemed the logical play. But instead State sprang a deceptive criss-cross with the ball changing hands three times. It was Treve who pulled down the runner; but the ball rested only two yards from the goal-line.

It took State four downs to put it over; but score they did, and the figures on the big board read, "State—13; Olympia—0." The try for goal was a failure. But what difference did it make? The game looked hopelessly one-sided. In spite of the frenzied exhortations of the yell-leaders, there seemed an admission of impending defeat in the Olympian cheers.

Although State threatened twice more before the half ended, they were unable to carry the ball over, and the score remained unchanged at the end of the half.

It was a sober lot of boys who filed into the locker-room, and dropped dejectedly on the benches. Vail went from one to another, offering quiet words of advice and commendation. Then he turned and faced them.

"First I want you all to understand that I've got no fault to find with you as a team. Forget the mistakes. We all make them. But you were always trying—and you gave the best you had. So much for that. But from the way most of you looked when you came in that door, I'd say that you think you're licked. And if that's what you think, then you *are* licked. But you can't lick a man—or a team—that won't be licked, and no team of mine was ever licked just because they thought they were."

"Remember," he went on, "that we've got something we haven't shown them yet. We've got an attack. Now we're going to spring it. Jessup plays quarter in place of Park this half, and McBride goes in for Jessup. You know what that means. Now, all that I ask of you—and all that the college asks—is that you go in there fighting. Keep your heads up—and fight all the time."

TREVE gathered in the ball on the kick-off, and ran and smashed his way down the center of the field for twenty-five yards. When, on the first line-up, he dropped back to the ball-carrier's position, there was a scattering of cheers from those who remembered his feats of former years. But Treve didn't hear them. His whole being was concentrated on the ball and the task before him. On the first play he ripped through a momentary opening between guard and tackle for seven yards. Thorwald made two more at center. Another drive yielded a scant first down; the Olympia cheering section bloomed into sound.

Treve again, on a cross-buck. This time he got clear through the secondary, but slipped and was smothered before he could regain his footing. A pass was grounded. On the next play, Treve started wide—then reversed sharply. A big State tackle lunged at him; but Treve plowed through the clutching arms, and made twelve yards before he was stopped.

"Rah—rah—rah! *Jessup!*"—from the stands.

Thorwald this time, but for no gain. And Olympia suffered a five-yard penalty for holding. Treve's try at end yielded but two yards. A pass was the orthodox play. But once more Treve took the ball from center. The interference swung to the right; but Treve, starting slowly, veered and dashed to the left—the weak side of the line. The State end had been taken out, and Treve was past the line of scrimmage before the other State backs could reverse their direction. Then two of them hit him, one after another. But he had gained momentum, and the hands that clutched him failed to hold.

He was through the pack now! Only the safety remained between him and the goal. Treve never changed direction. As some one put it afterward, he went through that tackler just as if no one were there; and a second later, amid the frenzied tumult of the stands, he had crossed the last white stripe.

The goal was converted, and the score stood, "State—13; Olympia—7."

Stung into a renewed aggressiveness, State carried the ball from the kick-off to the middle of the field, where Olympia held, and they were forced to kick. Again Treve started his attack. But the going was harder now. State was fighting bitterly. They had diagnosed Olympia's small répertoire of plays, and the fury of her first attack had spent itself. For minute after minute, the ball sawed across the middle of the field. The two teams were fighting each other to a standstill, but with the ball always in Olympian territory.

The third quarter ended—and the shadows were lengthening on the field. The crowd had grown curiously quiet—except for their excited breathing, like colossal sighs.

In front of State's bench, a half-dozen players began to warm up and then run out onto the field. These replace-

ments meant but one thing to Treve: State was going to launch a fresh offensive. He knew, too, that Vail's own reserves were exhausted—that the men on the bench were not good enough to take the place of the wearied players on the field.

It was the crisis. He knew it; the crowd knew it. In the brief moments of a time out, Treve called his men around him for a few words of desperate encouragement.

It was State's ball. On the first play, they sent a big fresh back through center for six yards. The same play again yielded a first down. Once more the giant State ground his way through the yielding Olympian line. Thorwald met him head on; and when the officials untangled the mass, Thorwald didn't get up.

It was Park the quarterback whom Vail was forced to send in as the only available substitute. When the teams lined up, Treve stationed himself behind the center of the line.

The same play again; and it was Treve this time who caught the crushing impact of the charge as the State back burst through. But the gain was for only two yards. A try at end—and again the drive at center. Treve knew it was coming. Instead of waiting, he started forward to meet it. For a blinding moment the two seemed to hang as if suspended, then went down under an avalanche of players. But the play was stopped.

When Treve regained his feet, the stadium was whirling about his head. He heard a whistle blow, and some one took hold of his arm and spoke to him. He shook the hand off, angrily. As his senses cleared, he glanced at the linesman's stakes. Third down, and eight to go.

State had gathered into the huddle. A sixth sense seemed to tell Treve what the play would be.

As the ball was snapped, State's ends broke down the field, and a back ran quickly to the right—then stopped, with the ball poised in his hand.

Ten thousand voices shrieked: "*A pass! It's a pass!*"

The ball was thrown; but the intended receiver had outrun the pass, and both Treve and Park were under it. To Treve there came an instantaneous perception of the possibilities of the situation.

"Take it!" he yelled to Park, and started down the field. A towering State tackle plunged toward him; but Treve rammed his shoulder into the man's middle, and sent him reeling.

They were up to the line of scrimmage now—and behind it—Treve ahead, and just behind him the speedy Park. Two State players were converging upon them, close together. In one stupendous effort, Treve hurled his body horizontally across theirs—and all three went down in a heap. In the clear, Park turned on all his speed, and left the pursuit hopelessly behind.

A touchdown! And—a moment later—a converted goal!

A chaos of sound beat and thundered in the air. And when, a few moments later, the game ended with the score: "Olympia—14; State—13," there was unleashed such a demonstration as had not been staged in the memory of the oldest graduate.

LONG before the last joy-crazed enthusiast had left the stadium, Treve managed to tear himself away, and found the General and Sadie waiting for him, as had been arranged, by the east entrance. The face of the tall officer was working strangely as he gripped Treve's hand.

"My boy," he said, "if that's what they call being a prima donna, why, West Point is going to have the greatest one that ever wore a football helmet."

And as for Sadie, the look in her brimming eyes as she got hold of Treve's other hand, was eloquent.

The moving story of a strong-willed elephant who packed a vicious grudge, went on the war path across all India and camped on his enemy's trail for seventy years.



Illustrated by
Frank Hoban

The Nose of Napoo

By BERTRAM ATKEY

HO, there, my prince of elephants—hurry up and finish your hay! Get a move on, my pearl of great price! Wake yourself up, lord of the jungles!" shouted Ashkat the mahout to Napoo—his gigantic beast of burden—as he came out of the office of the manager of the big timber-camp in which, with some hundreds of others, they were employed.

The big tusker, busy with a bale of hay almost as large as a taxicab, stopped eating in amazement and stared at his owner, with a gleam of pained surprise in his little eyes.

What was this? Hurry up! In his dinner-hour? And the dinner-hour only about three-quarters over! This was indeed news to Napoo. The thing was foolishness. Obviously, Ashkat was joking. The great elephant flapped his ears contemptuously, and continued to perform upon the hay-bale *adagio*, as before.

But the mahout soon undid him.

"Ha, obese hog of hogs, dost thou believe I lie, then? Listen, tank! When these remaining timber-baulks be stacked, each in its proper position, I receive payment and I finish my labor in this place. Dost thou understand this, large pig? Hasten, then—and if thy labor is finished by sunset, thou shalt receive a measure of sugar, a bundle of sugar-cane and a quart of arrack!"

He banged the old elephant hard upon the skull with a teakwood club, in order to clear his brain and make him understand. But he need not have troubled. Napoo understood.

A measure of sugar, a bundle of sugar-cane and a quart of arrack—if they finished hauling the logs by sunset!

Napoo was too fond of raw sugar, sugar-cane, and especially that highly alcoholic beverage arrack, not to understand when these were promised to him—and he did not get them so often that he could afford to refuse any offer without full consideration.

He cast his eye across at the log-strewn area which Ashkat wished him to clear by sunset.

It was a strenuous afternoon's work; he saw that. If his gigantic tusks did not ache severely by the time they had finished, he would be very much surprised—yes, indeed!

Still, a quart of arrack—good, strong, rough arrack with almost enough alcohol in it to pickle his interior—made it tempting.

Napoo was not a teetotaler, and he loved the pleasant glow which a rousing stimulant, after a hard day's work, a bath, and a feed, gave him.

Ashkat was watching him.

"Well, my rajah, my beautiful one," wheedled the mahout, "wilt thou hasten?"

Napoo speeded up with the hay-bale, and Ashkat said that he was the king of all elephants, and that he, Ashkat, was his father and mother.

"I will return for thee in five minutes, Napoo. Eat quickly!" he added, and hurried away....

The way in which Napoo worked that afternoon positively scandalized the other elephants at the camp. The spectacle was so unusual that it seriously interfered with the labors of the others. They could hardly work for watching him.

Although he did not actually haul the logs at a canter.

he came near it. It was well that there was no union of elephant workers, or the shop steward would have wanted to know something about it. There would have been a strike against overproduction in that timber-yard, as sure as tusks aren't teeth.

And all for the sake of a quart of arrack and some sugar!

"*One*, Ashkat, that is a devil-possessed elephant of thine! Bang him hard upon the head, lest we others be called lazy and slow," shouted Mango, the chief elephant-driver.

Mango was growing old and idle, and his elephant and he liked to work at their own pace—which was some laps per hour less than that at which Napoo was storming along.

But Ashkat, perched comfortably on the back of Napoo's neck, only grinned and thought of the holiday coming to him.

Even the manager spared a moment from his labor to notice it. Leaning against his office door with a cheero, he stared.

"I was wrong to promise to pay off that low-browed crook, Ashkat," he said. "That elephant of his is worth any three of the others here."

He reflected for a moment, then beckoned Ashkat across. The mahout slid down, and directing the attention of the perspiring Napoo to a log almost of the proportions of a small submarine, instructed him to carry on with that log, and went across to the manager.

"Your elephant is going *mush* (mad), Ashkat," he said.

"Nay, sahib. He is working well, that is all. He is a good elephant, and he shames all these fat slugs that haul but one log while he hauls three," replied Ashkat.

"I don't know so much about that," said the manager. "There's a funny look about him, I think. I shouldn't be surprised if he were to die suddenly. He looks very queer indeed. Er—how much do you want for him?"

Ashkat brightened up considerably. This was very convenient. The sahib wished to buy his elephant, eh? The offer could not have come at a better moment, for Ashkat was on the point of giving up work entirely. He had recently had several little windfalls—at least, he called them windfalls, though the police might have named them differently—and he was not, strictly, one of the hereditary elephant-drivers. He had, as it were, barged into the business on the strength of much tall talk and the possession of old Napoo—the devious means by which he had obtained him is another story—and he had had many irons in the fire.

Enough of them had heated to render him comparatively well-to-do, and he now proposed going back to where he belonged, namely, Nagpur in the Central Provinces, where he had a number of ordinary friends, some enemies, and one or two very special friends—ladies, these last.

If to his accumulation he could add a thumping good price for Napoo, he would be able to cut a pretty wide swath in certain Nagpur circles—and that was tempting.

So he mentioned a price; the manager mentioned another—half of Ashkat's. They worried it out for an hour, and finally completed the deal.

"Ah, sahib, you have bought the best elephant in Bengal for the price of the worst," said Ashkat. "Yes, sahib, assuredly I will tell him to obey Mango Chut, who is to be appointed his mahout. He will work well for Mango, who is the best mahout in the whole of India—next to me."

"Next to you!" The manager laughed. "You are a

rotten mahout, Ashkat—with a good elephant you don't appreciate!"

Ashkat protested—more as a matter of form than because he really cared. The manager was right, and he knew it. He only valued Napoo for what the elephant could produce. He never took more trouble about the big beast than he could avoid, and than was absolutely necessary to keep Napoo in health.

Still he protested; a protest never does much harm, and may do good.

Then he went back to finish the day's work, his mind on the pretty things he would now be able to lavish on Lalji, his chief lady-friend in Nagpur—Lalji the Lovely, queen, so to speak, of the tight-packed quarter from which Ashkat originally came.

NAPOO finished the timber-hauling and swung contentedly away to his pickets. Now, in a little while, for the arrack and the sugar! It was not such a bad old world after all, thought Napoo, as he ambled away. And even if one did have a tough for a mahout, things might be worse.

At the pickets were the manager and Mango, and Ashkat held a little conversation with the big tusker—conversation of which the elephant understood every word.

"Behold, my pearl, I go upon a journey. But thou dost not accompany me. Thou wilt remain here and haul timber for Mango. In all things obey Mango, who will be as kind to thee as possible. Bear that in mind, great one, for the *ankus* of Mango is heavy and sharp, and if thou art slothful assuredly will Mango batter out thy brains."

He turned away without emotion.

"And now, sahib, concerning the price," he said, and followed the manager to his office.

Napoo smiled to himself and got ready for the arrack and the sugar—and the sugar-cane.

Time passed. For an hour Napoo rocked to and fro, and for an hour after that. For he was a patient elephant. But he was getting impatient.

"That low blackguard Ashkat has either forgotten my supper, or else it's harder to get hold of a little drop of arrack than it was in my young days," mused the great elephant. "And out of those two reasons it aint the last one that's holding up my supper."

He brooded sulkily.

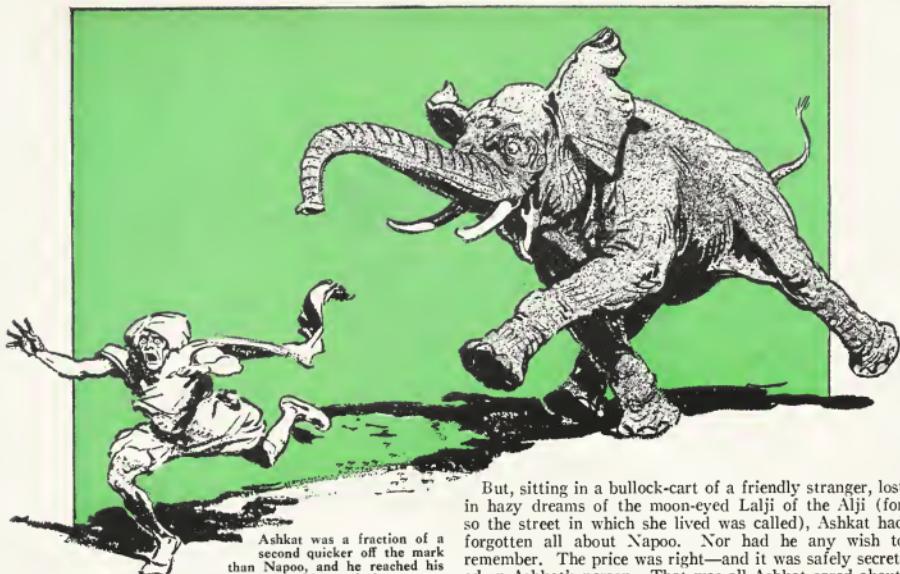
"Other elephants in this camp get their little drop of arrack now and then," he reflected. "Because they've got decent mahouts. But me—how often do I get any—even when it's promised? Never! Why? Because I'm unlucky in my mahout. Because I got a half-breed, up-country son of a rat-catcher for a mahout, instead of a true-bred elephant-man. And I'm gettin' about fed up with it. That's what!"

He trumpeted angrily for Ashkat. But all the answer he got was a dour promise from Mango Chut that he would come across and cut his liver out if he didn't make less noise.

For a moment Napoo subsided, for Mango Chut was a genuine elephant-man.

But, then, Mango did not know that when Ashkat had left camp, two hours before, he had completely forgotten his promise to Napoo. It never occurred to Mango that any mahout could possibly forget to feed his elephant after a day's work. That was a crime unheard-of in Mango's philosophy. The old mahout probably attributed Napoo's uneasiness to indigestion, or some such matter.

But trouble was brewing—and brewing fast. The more Napoo thought over the treacherously broken promise of Ashkat, the more furious he became.



Ashkat was a fraction of a second quicker off the mark than Napoo, and he reached his bolt-hole with one inch to spare.

"I've stood enough and more'n enough from that low hound Ashkat!" he told himself finally, boiling with fury. "And now I'll square up with him—once and for all!"

It was quite dark now, and with a slight wrench Napoo tore himself free from his pickets, and rolled forward looking for Ashkat.

But, fortunately for Ashkat, he was well on his way to Nagpur. Had Napoo come across him just then, his life might have been worth an anna—but by no means more.

And, even as it was, Ashkat was far from being out of the wood, for Napoo possessed something of which not only Ashkat, but almost everyone else, was aware—and that was a nose like a bloodhound.

From where he had inherited this extraordinary gift it was impossible to say. The only thing certain about it was the fact that he possessed it. Never yet, in the whole of his life, had the tracking power of the old elephant been thoroughly tried out. But now it was going to be.

The first thing Napoo did when he was free was to steer himself unobtrusively across to the big forage dump, where he took on board supplies enough to last him for quite a time.

Then he cast about the sleeping-camp until he picked up Ashkat's trail, which he settled down to follow—if necessary to the edge of the earth. For Napoo's mind was made up—and when his mind was made up dynamite would have been needed to persuade him to change it. Ashkat, as has been explained, was not a genuine elephant-man. But had he only known that Napoo had his trunk to the ground on his—Ashkat's—trail, he was quite wise enough about elephants to know that the best thing he could do would be to buy a barrel of arrack and hurriedly cart it back to the camp to placate the exasperated pachyderm.

But, sitting in a bullock-cart of a friendly stranger, lost in hazy dreams of the moon-eyed Lalji of the Alji (for so the street in which she lived was called), Ashkat had forgotten all about Napoo. Nor had he any wish to remember. The price was right—and it was safely secreted on Ashkat's person. That was all Ashkat cared about, then. Later, Napoo changed his opinion for him, as will be seen.

It was on the seventh of May, many years ago, that the events so far recorded in this true (roughly speaking) story took place.

Ashkat left the camp at six-thirty, *en route* for Nagpur. Napoo left the camp at nine-thirty—*en route* for Ashkat. Ashkat's age was twenty-six. Napoo's was seventy-eight. Mark that, dear reader. . . .

It is no perversion of the truth to say that the distance from Dacca, in Bengal—near which town was the timber-camp—to Nagpur, in Central India, is seven hundred and fifty miles, as the crow flies.

Napoo, however, it is scarcely necessary to add, was not a crow. He was a big bull elephant, in a cold, sour, deadly temper.

But if Napoo was not a crow, neither was Ashkat; and Ashkat made one fatal error at the very start—two, in fact. One was that he decided to go on foot, when he could not "scrounge" a ride. The second mistake was that he rested his large hot hand for one instant on the rim of the wheel of the bullock-cart in which he wheeled his first ride.

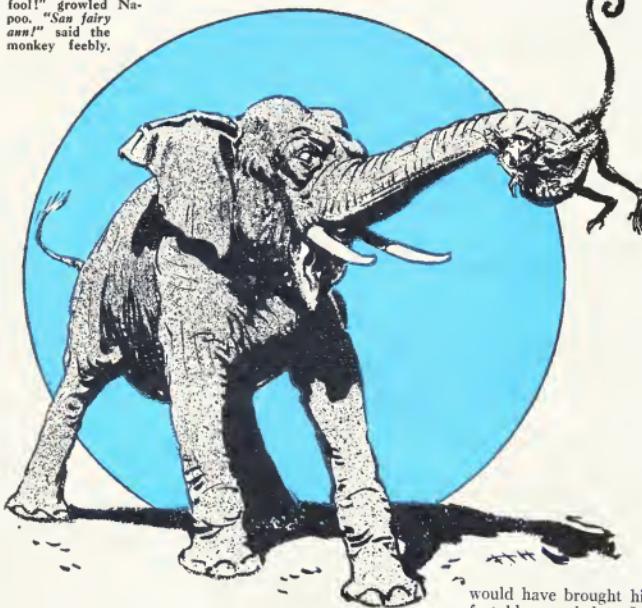
Three days later Napoo, nosing diligently about the roads round the town, stopped suddenly, sniffing hard at a certain spot. Then he wagged his tail. He had hit the trail! He cast forward a little, found another Ashkat-flavored spot,—where the wheel completed another revolution, bringing the place where Ashkat had touched it in contact with the road again,—and from then onward followed the trail up.

The spotty nature of the scent puzzled the old tusker considerably.

"Is the man hopping home on one hand, or what?" he asked himself as he rolled along.

But, before he could answer, a native policeman, who had been watching him, stepped out into the road and

"You're a damn' fool!" growled Napoo. "San fairy ann!" said the monkey feebly.



commanded him to consider himself under arrest. Even in India they do not care to have loose elephants wandering all over the landscape.

But Napoo was not in any mood for argument. He raised his trunk from the trail, lapped it around the policeman, and gently deposited him on the side of the road.

"Hrumpf-ah!" said Napoo warningly.

The native policeman very wisely *hrumpf-ah'd*—down the road as hard as he could gait it. Something seemed to tell him that it was better so.

Twenty miles on, Napoo lost the trail completely. This was annoying. Things had been going so swimmingly that already Napoo had begun to dream dreams about the quart of arrack which he intended having out of Ashkat; either that or his life-blood, one of the two—which one, Napoo was willing to leave to Ashkat's discretion.

But with the intelligence that even those great bloodhounds Chatley Blazer or old Uncle Tom, the famous Cuban slave-hound—now fortunately dead—might have been forgiven for not possessing, Napoo decided to stick to the main road.

The result was that he picked up the trail again at Chanderlagore, followed it into Calcutta, lost and found it about eighty-three times in that great city and a week later, after being captured and recaptured until it became a perfect farce to try and hold him prisoner, he had the extraordinarily bad luck to strike the trail of a wandering fakir whose general flavor was precisely the same as that of Ashkat.

This trail was a week old, but Napoo was equal to it. He inhaled the scent with a thrill of joy, and pausing only to snatch a hasty snack from the stock of a frenzied but unlucky fruit-seller, he followed up the trail.

He followed it for twelve months, and ran into his man just outside Lahore—a thousand-odd miles from Calcutta.

Only then did he discover that the fakir was not Ashkat, nor resembled him in any degree, save flavor.

Napoo threw him into a reservoir, drowning him, and returned to Calcutta—for he was a patient elephant, and fond of arrack.

They captured him there again, and gave him a job of work in the suburbs connected with hauling masonry. This job Napoo left of his own accord ten minutes after he began, and headed westward, his trunk to the ground. He traveled a long way and for many months in this fashion, interfering with no one, and permitting no one to interfere with him.

"I'll get this guy Ashkat, or compensation in the shape of arrack, if it takes me a thousand years!" was the idea inspiring the old elephant—for, as will have been guessed, he was persistent as well as patient and thirsty.

It was, in a way, a great pity that he turned south at Raipur, for a little further perseverance would have brought him to Nagpur, where Ashkat, comfortably married to Lalji, had settled down to build up a good business as an all-round "sharp," making a specialty of receiving stolen goods.

Indeed, it is highly probable that Napoo would have nosed quietly on to Nagpur had he not got a whiff of a scent on the road leading out of Raipur which, though not pure Ashkat, nevertheless resembled it so very closely that Napoo decided, after some consideration, to gamble on it. He gambled on it for three years and a half.

It was a curious trail, this. Napoo lost it first at Hyderabad—some two thousand miles south of Raipur—a fortnight after he first connected with it. He was captured in Hyderabad, and worked unwillingly for the Nizam, carting water, for two years. Several times he crossed the trail, very stale, in the city, but one day he came plump on it, fresh and full. He broke away then and followed it at a racing pace down to the river, when he promptly lost it again.

A tame monkey, afflicted with the insatiable curiosity of his kind, drew near to the excited Napoo and made a polite inquiry as to his trouble.

"What's the matter, old man?" asked the monkey. Napoo ceased blowing his own trumpet for a moment, and regarded the ape superciliously.

"You been here long?" he demanded.

"About an hour and a half," the monkey replied.

"Well, did you see the man who made this footprint?" The monkey grinned. Like all monkeys, he could not keep up an interest in a thing for more than a few seconds, and this was somewhat of a tall order. "About three hundred people have crossed the river this morning," he said, yawning. "Which footprint d'you mean?"

Napoo indicated one with his trunk.

The monkey came up and peered at the footprint.

"This one?" he asked.

"Yes—have you seen the man who made that footprint?"

"Have I seen the man who made it?"

"That's it."

"Yes, I've seen him," said the monkey.

"Did he cross over?"

"I expect so. He was one of the three hundred."

"Which one?"

"I don't know," said the monkey.

"But you said you'd seen him!"

"So I did. I've seen three hundred people cross over this morning. And he was one of them."

"Yes; but which one?"

"I don't know."

"D'you know what you are? You're a damn' fool!" growled Napoo; and forthwith he grabbed and flung the animal up against a tree, braining him.

"San fairy ann!" said the monkey feebly in pure A. E. F. French, and expired. . . .

Napoo crossed the river and picked up the trail almost immediately. And at last he had a gleam of luck, for the trail, which was that of a silver-worker who had been lent to the Court jewelers of the Nizam by a firm at Benares, finished at Benares some months later, and the first thing that happened when Napoo trudged patiently into Benares was that he came right on the genuine trail of Ashkat himself, who, by sheer luck, had come up to Benares from Nagpur only two days before, to dispose of certain articles connected with his business.

MAD with excitement, his mind ablaze with visions of arrack—arrack in jars, in pans, in pails, in tubs; arrack to right of him, arrack to left of him—the elephant charged along on Ashkat's trail.

But Ashkat, by now, was well used to having things on his trail—police generally—and he saw the elephant coming. He was standing near the entry to a dim, narrow, tortuously winding alleyway; one rarely saw Ashkat nowadays very far from some such convenient bolt-hole.

Napoo caught sight of him, and trumpeted a wild threat of what he meant to do to him. People were scattering, screaming that the big tusker was *musth*. But he ignored them, plumping along intent only on Ashkat.

Suddenly Ashkat recognized him. It was obvious to anyone who had any knowledge at all of elephants and their little ways that Napoo was out for Ashkat, and Ashkat alone. The ex-mahout had hardly begun to wonder why—when, in spite of the years which had elapsed, he remembered that he had, as it were, swindled Napoo out of a very hard afternoon's work with the promise of a supper which he had never given him. Ashkat needed nobody to tell him that elephants have long memories. And here he made his second mistake. Had he gone up to Napoo and soothed him with fair words until he could procure him a good "go" of arrack and sugar, he might have finished the feud right away. But he was not a true elephant-man, and his nerve failed him.

He hesitated a second, then popped into his bolt-hole like a rabbit, and was gone where Napoo could not, by reason of his bulk, follow him. He heard, far in the rear, the clamor which arose as the elephant butted and tore at the crazy sides of the lane, wrecking the jerry-built houses all around, and he decided forthwith to leave Benares while going was good.

So he worked his way around to the station.

Napoo, whose abnormal powers of scent had been extraordinarily developed during the last few years, winded him halfway across the city, and followed him, arriving at the station just in time to see Ashkat clamber into a train and disappear.

Late that night Napoo might have been seen tramping steadily down the line in the direction in which the train had vanished.

All went well until he reached Jabalpur, where a slight misunderstanding with a light shunting engine sent the engine into the repair-shop and Napoo into the hands of the veterinarian for the local authorities, who healed him and put him to more or less hard labor "on the land." He was so grateful for being healed that he worked all one afternoon on the land; but that night he proceeded on his way.

It was instinct now which was impelling him on to Nagpur, nothing else—but it was a good instinct, for it brought him first to a fresh trail of Ashkat, in Nagpur, some weeks later, and presently into full view of that gentleman, who was sitting behind a stall near his customary bolt-hole, working on a bracelet.

Napoo did not trumpet this time when he saw the ex-mahout. On the contrary, he came on with the silence and stealth of a cat.

But Ashkat, fortunately for himself, saw him—and forthwith disappeared, leaving Napoo to wreak his vengeance on the mat and such of Ashkat's wares as the man left behind.

He perceived that Napoo was after him, and probably proposed to spend the rest of his life in "getting" him. He thought it all over, and decided to lie very low indeed for such time as was necessary for him to dispose of his goods, and then to leave Nagpur.

The following day, having disposed of perhaps four-fifths of his property, at serious loss, he was sitting indoors, arranging with Lalji—rather less lovely now—about following him, when a great trunk suddenly came snaking through the doorway, and the doorpost cracked under the pressure of a great head.

With a start of horror, Ashkat "snaked" in turn—out of the window, and over a few roofs, and then ran.

Napoo delayed too long over the pleasant task of reducing Ashkat's house to ruins, for by the time he gave up searching for him among the débris, Ashkat was well on his way to Amritsar, in the Punjab, with the intention of putting a thousand miles between him and his former property without delay.

That was the last that the two saw of each other for more than twenty years, though Napoo was frequently in Ashkat's thoughts, and Ashkat was permanently in Napoo's; for Napoo was a tenacious elephant.

During that long period Napoo made the beginnings of a reputation which finally came to be known throughout India—for he searched that country for Ashkat as with a fine-tooth comb.

THEY got to know him well in Madras and Mysore, for he put in a lot of honest searching in Southern India. He was far from being regarded as a stranger in the Bombay province, and as for Hyderabad, they got to know him like an old friend. Because he had once nearly "snaffled" Ashkat in Nagpur, he had a weakness for the Central Provinces, and usually could be relied upon to turn up along about the autumn of every year. Bengal and Assam bore upon their faces many millions of his footprints; at Dacca once they recognized him, and the manager of the timber-yard where the original promise of arrack had been made tried to detain him and give him a job. He claimed, and rightly, to be Napoo's owner. But he might as well have tried to detain a simoom. Napoo threw him into a water-tank, and left. The flavor of Ashkat had quite died out of the place, and Napoo was no longer interested. He ran through Nepal, but was unlucky—it was in Nepal he lost half a tusk, splin-

tered on a rock during a misunderstanding with a brace of tigers. He worked his weary way through Agra and Oudh to Rajputana, without result.

"I'll take a quick run through the Punjab," he said, "and then nip down to Nagpur. It's time I had another look round down there." And this he did.

But he had not reached that stage without adventures enough to fill a thick volume and to empty a dictionary. He had been "pinched" a hundred times, but he no longer killed the light-fingered gentry who tried to steal him. That had become monotonous. He usually threw them into the nearest water and proceeded on his way. He became as familiar with jungles, deserts, and forests as with towns. He fell in love with wild and tame ladies of his species, but he never really settled down to permanent domestic bliss. He fought many battles with other elephants, and won most of them—for much exercise had rendered him very nippy on his feet. Tigers and similar interesting denizens of India he destroyed *ad lib*, if they interfered with him.

And his sense of smell became miraculous. His health was perfect, and except for a growing tendency toward corns on the feet, left nothing to be desired. His patience was monumental, and his passion for the arrack he was determined to get from Ashkat some day became unique.

Occasionally he had a drink of arrack given him, but it never tasted as arrack should—as for instance, the particular quart he was in search of would taste. That, by much dwelling and brooding upon it, he believed would be a species of nectar, when he got it, with which no other arrack would be comparable.

AS for Ashkat, he had settled down in Amritsar and prospered exceedingly. He was one of the kind that prosper.

Then, as luck would have it, he and Napoo came face to face with each other one day in Lahore. Each recognized the other in a flash, though time had worked many changes with them. The meeting was so unexpected that they stared at each other for a second, rigid.

Then Ashkat started for a bolt-hole—an alley about thirty yards off. He ran as few men over sixty have ever run. He was a fraction of a second quicker off the mark than Napoo, and he reached the alley with one inch to spare.

Napoo followed him up the alley by sheer impetus until he was wedged in so tightly as to be immovable.

And by the time they had pulled down half the alley to release him, Ashkat had returned to Amritsar, settled his affairs, and, leaving the business in charge of his eldest son, had departed *en route* to Mandalay.

But he was only just in time. Even as he left the old home he heard a crash behind him, and, turning, he saw the indefatigable Napoo starting to search his house inch by inch—just as he had done at Nagpur more than twenty years before.

Save for the money he had on him, Ashkat was penniless, and he now did the worst thing possible. He decided that he would travel mainly by road to Mandalay—nearly fifteen hundred miles as the crow would fly, if any crow were sufficiently ill-advised to attempt the trip.

During the first thousand miles Ashkat had thirty-two narrow squeaks, seventeen close shaves, nine near things, four within-an-aces, two skins-of-his-teeth, and two hundred and nine false alarms—all from the attentions of Napoo.

Finally, at Patna, months later, Ashkat, in spite of his dwindling money reserve, took to a boat on the Ganges, and had the first night's rest he had had since leaving Amritsar.

"I was a fool to break my word about that arrack," he said as he curled up stiffly in the boat, leaving Napoo trumpeting his disgust on the bank after one of the "skin-of-his-teeth" escapes.

And then Napoo struck a streak of really bad luck.

He followed the river down to Bhagalpur, and there hit upon another "double" of Ashkat—a scent double, that is to say. Unless they have about three hundred million different kinds of scents, one for each person in India, a country with a population of three hundred millions—which is unlikely—it was inevitable that Napoo should suffer an occasional duplication of Ashkat's flavor, such as this one which he lighted upon in Bhagalpur. It was stale, perhaps a month old. But this was nothing to a tracker with Napoo's power of scent. He followed it.

Whoever the owner of it was, he was traveling fast. He was, indeed, a lama, hurrying home, traveling light, from a tour in India—and Napoo followed him to Thibet.

The lama fell over a precipice not far from Lhasa, and by a miracle of ingenuity Napoo climbed down after him—only to discover that he had been following a delusion and a snare. This body was that of a religious man.

Napoo laboriously climbed out of the chasm and went back to Patna. He thought it over as he went—his trunk-tip, as usual, half an inch from the ground—and he decided to give Nagpur another trial, and, failing that, run through all India once more. For he was a patient elephant. It was, he considered, a good idea. He was a hundred and thirteen years old when he first got this idea, and Ashkat was about sixty-one.

As he planned it, so Napoo performed it.

Thirty-four years later Napoo finally relinquished the idea that Ashkat would return to his old haunts, and further, came definitely to the conclusion that he was not in India proper at all.

He came to this conclusion one afternoon in a paddy-field down in Madras.

"There's no doubt about it," he mused. "The swine dodged me properly that time at Patna. He went south past Dacca—and stopped south. I'll give the south a trial—Burma. And I hope I touch lucky this trip, for I'm not so young as I used to be, and I'm getting fed up—in a way. Right, then! I'll give Burma a look-up."

He heaved himself out of the paddy-field, full of rice and optimism, trampled the owner of the rice into the mud as that individual unwisely came out to drive him off, and started for Burma—a seventeen-hundred-mile stroll, if it were an inch.

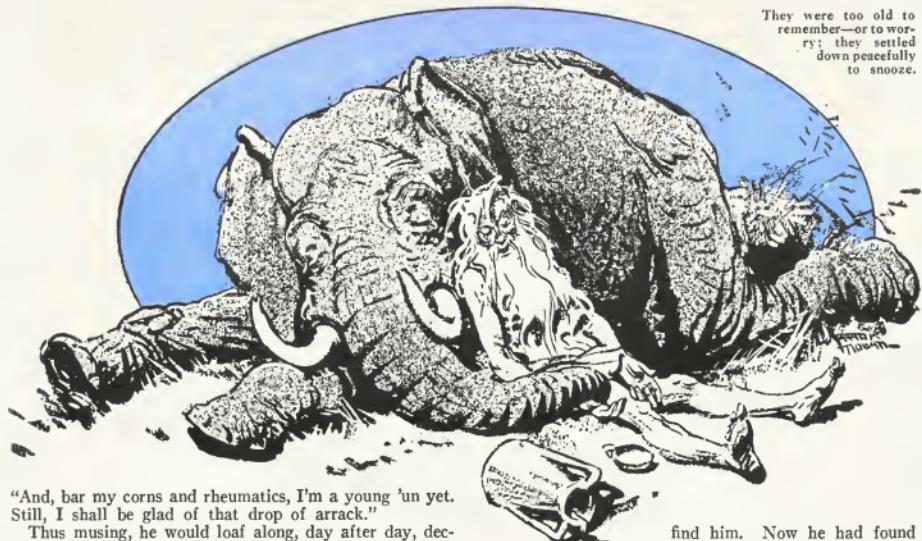
NAPOO was now a hundred and forty-seven years old, and Ashkat, if living, would be about ninety-five.

Time had told on the elephant, particularly on his feet. His corns were very troublesome, and his skin had lost the bloom of youth. His tusks were not at all what they had been, and the few hairs he bore upon his body were gray.

He was a familiar sight all over India now, and he rarely found it necessary to kill people. They left him pretty much to himself. In his younger days he had been short-tempered, but he had long grown out of that.

He was now, really, a philosophical and extremely expert long-distance tramp, who enjoyed himself far more than one might have imagined.

"I've seen life," he would muse. "And I've visited cities in my time. I've had a lot of good food and my share of bad. I guess I've got a keener sense of smell than anything else on legs in Asia." That was true. If Ashkat ever got within forty miles of Napoo the elephant's power of scent was now ample to pick him out at that range.



"And, bar my corns and rheumatics, I'm a young 'un yet. Still, I shall be glad of that drop of arrack."

Thus musing, he would loaf along, day after day, decade after decade.

He was Experience incarnate. What he did not know about India was not worth knowing. He had a friend in every town, a wife in every jungle where elephants lived. From Trivandrum to Kabul, from Tutticorn to Lhasa, from Gilghit to Cattack, from Manipur to Herat, Napoo had nosed his way, hither and yon, there and back.

Now he was going to have a glance at Burma. But he was aging fast, and it was not till five years later—for he had looked in at Baroda, where twenty years before he had smelled a track not unlike that of Ashkat, on the way—that he approached Mandalay.

He was not hurrying—just doddering along, taking it easy, for he was feeling rather tired. He was considerably over at the knees, too, and deaf, and his eyes were dim.

It is a long-lived elephant who lives over a hundred and fifty years—and Napoo was now a hundred and fifty-two. But he always had been a tenacious animal.

He slowly climbed a hill some thirty miles from Mandalay; arrived at the top, he paused to take a good comprehensive sniff of the surrounding country, then to assort the various and many odors.

But with the first inhalation he started and stiffened. There was a strong touch of pure Ashkat in the air—unmistakable, plentiful. It came from about twenty miles east.

"That's Ashkat!" said the old elephant. "*Bismallah!* How it takes my mind back!"

Slowly chuckling a senile chuckle, Napoo tottered away down the hillside.

Late that afternoon he found himself approaching a lonely hut, which stood all by itself in a clearing.

He halted on the edge of the clearing and peered out.

Sitting in the sunshine by the door was an old, old man, with a white beard and white hair, nodding and talking to himself. It was Ashkat.

Napoo stared at him. Yes, it was Ashkat. He could not see him plainly, but his nose could not deceive him.

The old elephant was worried. He wanted this old man badly—very badly. He had gone to a lot of trouble to

They were too old to remember—or to worry; they settled down peacefully to snooze.

find him. Now he had found him, but he had clean forgotten why he had wanted to find him!

It was something about some timber somewhere, he fancied, or some timber-yard, or something or other; for the life of him Napoo could not remember. For he was well on into his second calf-hood—well on. . . . It was a pity—a great pity; but probably it didn't matter much.

Then a small boy came round the corner of the hut, carrying a two-quart vessel.

For, as it chanced, Ashkat was celebrating his hundredth birthday, and one of his little great-great-grandsons had brought him up a gift of arrack from the village.

"Here's the arrack, Grandfather," said the child, staring at the old man.

Then he asked: "Grandfather, why do you like to live up here all alone?"

"Hey, my boy?" asked Ashkat, who was very deaf.

The boy repeated the question, and Ashkat pondered.

"Why, because—Let me see, now—why was it?"

He puzzled over it for a minute, then lost interest.

"I don't know, my boy," he said. "There was a reason in my young days; I think I used to be afraid of something down there—I dunno. I've forgotten what it was."

"They say you're afraid of elephants, Grandfather," said the little boy.

"No, my son—not at my time o' life. I never was."

"Good-by, Grandfather," said the boy—and went away.

Old Ashkat peered about, and took a pull of arrack.

Napoo liked the smell of the arrack as it was wafted to his nostrils. It seemed to stir old memories; it did not awake them, but shook, as it were, their dry bones.

He doddered across the clearing.

The old man saw him, and it occurred to him that in his young days elephants would drink arrack. So he took a long pull at his pannikin, refilled it, and offered it to the elephant. Napoo drank it gratefully.

Between them they finished the two quarts.

They were very old—too old to remember, or to worry if they had remembered. . . . Then they settled down peacefully in the sunshine to snooze.



The Cowboy Today *by WILL JAMES*

PEOPLE have been given the idea that all of the big West has been took over by the farmer and barbed-wire fences, that the cattle are all named and in lots, and the cowboy is either in the movies or pushing a plow.

With the fine highways stringing across the big stretches and a powerful car to take a tourist along, there's no chance much to see what there is of the West. But on both sides of them highways there's scopes of open range country, some of 'em two hundred miles across, which is still cowboy territory.

Of course the old West of the buffalo and Indian fight-

ing days is gone, but the cowboy of today is still doing the same riding his dad did forty years ago. His horse will never be substituted by no machine; the cattle still are so they have to be roped and branded; rustlers are still on the job—and all the goings-on in the land will also be the same forty years from now.

The cowboy's God has been good. He's saved him plenty of country that nobody can take away from him. It's too rough or dry to farm or irrigate and none of us alive today will see the time when "brogans" will replace his riding-boots or a shovel take the place of his loop.



*A story of the
Secret Service*

By VALENTINE
WILLIAMS

Miss Parritt Disappears

Illustrated by Edward Ryan

MANY people are under the impression that the alluring vamp of spy fiction is a recognized figure of secret-service work. I hate to disillusion you, but such is really not the case. Women have their uses in espionage, but the general experience has been that their tendency to survey a situation through the glasses of their emotions rather than their reason, and their fatal predisposition to dramatize their relations with the opposite sex make their value as regular agents questionable. I have had dealings in my day with more than one of these hush-hush sisters; and those who were not out-and-out adventuresses, and therefore untrustworthy, usually fiddled around with a little espionage as a sideline.

All of which should go to prove that Frances Parritt was the exception that proves the rule. I have had to give her a fictitious name for reasons that will appear. If you are looking for a rapturously lovely and wonderfully gowned adventures of the Olga-from-the-Volga order, however, I am compelled to disappoint you. The Parritt, as we called her behind her back, was irredeemably plain—much given, also, to the wearing of tweeds and low-heeled shoes. To state, however, that at a time when the British Secret Service ranked second to none (in the years immediately preceding the war) she was classed with the star turns, is only to do justice to her extreme efficiency, unfailing resourcefulness and rocklike determination.

On her frequent missions abroad, where all the counter-espionage services of the Continent would be keeping their eyes peeled for fellows like Francis Okewood, Philip Brewster or your humble servant, nobody paid any attention to the insignificant little Englishwoman, who, I should explain, concealed behind the placid self-assurance of a deaconess the memory of a *Datas* and a brilliant fluency in foreign languages. Her reports on the Frisian coast defenses, I recollect, were remarkable; the only really adequate survey of the Heligoland works which the Admiralty had in its files up to the outbreak of the war came in large part from her; and it was she who, on a sketching trip to the Danube in the summer of 1912, gave the first reliable warning of the storm gathering in the Balkans.

For all that we treated her like one of ourselves, she was in no sense a masculine woman. I cannot remember ever to have seen her except in traveling clothes; but that she took a certain feminine care of her looks was evident from the whiteness of her hands and the fine luster of her abundant brown hair. Yet there was no feminine fluffiness about the Parritt. She would breeze into the office from Agram, or Abö, or Swinemünde, or wherever it might be, make her report and clear out. And she never loafed on the job.

Picture, then, the alarm and despondency at Headquarters when one day the Parritt incontinently vanished off the map. It was, if I remember rightly, during the summer of 1913, and the month was June. At that time, for our knowledge of the doings of the German Fleet we chiefly relied upon one Andresen at Kiel, a naturalized German of Danish birth. Andresen's work had been falling off. His reports had grown scanty and were none too trustworthy. So the Chief, always on the alert for signs of double-crossing, packed the Parritt off to Kiel to investigate.

She notified us of her arrival in the ordinary way. Then silence. It was the Parritt's pride that she always contrived to keep in touch with the office: yet more than a week went by without further word from her. And almost simultaneously with her arrival Andresen dried up for good.

I was the most fluent German scholar available in London at the time. "This is a straight job, Clavering," the Chief told me as he gave me my orders. "As you're not known at Kiel, you can safely appear as an ordinary summer tourist. To call upon Miss Parritt at her boarding-house as a friend from London will involve you in no risk. You and I know our Parritt. Her cover is sound—she's supposed to be inquiring about post-graduate courses at the University—and in no conceivable circumstances will she ever give the game away. If she really has disappeared, you'd best go boldly to the police, in which case you'll not want to be messing round with disguises or faked identity business."

Andresen kept a beer-garden at the water's edge on the



I was taking no chances. I did not deflect my gaze, and—some one leaped on me from behind.

outskirts of Kiel. I had located Miss Parritt's *pension*—she always stayed at *pensions* in preference to hotels—on the map, but before looking her up, I decided to run out and give Andresen's place the once-over.

I left my bag at the station and boarded a tram which dropped me at the terminus. It was late on a golden June afternoon. Five minutes' tramp along the dusty coast road brought me in sight of a rustic signboard, and beyond it, of a ramshackle kind of pavilion with a dozen or so roughly carpentered tables set out in a clearing among some pines. A deep silence reigned and between the trees there were glimpses of white sails upon gleaming blue waters. The place seemed deserted, but that did not surprise me. Andresen's was clearly one of those establishments to be met with in the environs of so many German cities where on Sundays workmen bring their families to drink a glass of beer and play skittles under the trees.

As I entered the garden, a woman appeared from the house. My heart sank when she was near enough for me to distinguish her face. It was ghastly, and her eyes were red and swollen. I asked myself what tragedy could have befallen. When she returned with my Pilsener I sought to draw her into talk, but she answered only in monosyllables, her face obstinately turned toward the house as though she were anxious to be gone. As a last resource, pointing to the decrepit skittle alley which skirted one side of the garden, I ventured: "If your husband's about, perhaps he'd give me a game?"

On that she grew sullen. "My man isn't here," she proffered. "Maybe he'll be back later?" I hazarded. She shook her head. "He's away just now." "For how long?" I persisted.

"What's it to you?" she demanded roughly, rounding on me; then to my dismay she fell into a fit of weeping. "Um Gottes Willen," I entreated her, "I hope I've said nothing indiscreet! I only asked after Herr Andresen," —I made a deliberate pause,—"because I've heard my friend Miss Parritt speak of him."

Thereupon the woman lifted her streaming face to mine. "So? The gentleman is a friend of the English miss? The Herr is English too, perhaps?"

"Certainly," I told her, and made up my mind to give her a lead. "Won't you tell me what's happened to Andresen?"

The look she bestowed upon me was charged with doubt and suspicion. But I had to discover whether she was in her husband's confidence, so I drew a bow at a venture. "Number 131," I added softly, giving Andresen the designation he bore on our books.

With a panic-stricken air she stared at me, pressing her thin hands to her face. Then glancing over her shoulder she said under her breath: "Did the Herr notice a man as he came in the gate?"

"No," I answered.

She plucked my sleeve and pointed. Through the trees I saw a thick-set figure in black, its back to the garden, standing under the sign-board.

"Come quickly," the woman whispered. And picking up my glass, she led the way into the house.

After I had followed her in, she closed the door and stood before it. "Six days ago some men came and took my husband away," she said. "They were secret police. Since then one has stayed on guard outside day and night. You were lucky he didn't see you come in." She bent her head listening. But all was quiet outside.

"And my friend Miss Parritt? Did she come here to see your husband?"

"Three days in succession. On the fourth day they took him. As they led him away he whispered to me to tell her to leave Kiel instantly. But she didn't come back, and I didn't know her address."

Well, it was clear that there was nothing further to be done at Andresen's. Frau Andresen let me out by the back door and showed me a path through the woods which, she said, would bring me out on the tram-line a kilometer away, out of sight of the watcher on the road. Without incident I picked up a tram and, returning to the city, went straight to Miss Parritt's *pension*, which was in the center of the town.

At the *pension* I affected to be looking for accommodation and made the landlady show me several rooms before I casually inquired whether she had any other English guests. There had been one, she said—*cine sehr nette Dame*, a Miss Parritt. But she had left some days before, to stay with friends. Three minutes later I was back in the street with the Parritt's address in my notebook. She was stopping with Herr and Frau Helmstedter at the Villa Waldelsruhe, which lay in the woods a mile or so on the land-side of Kiel.

The Parritt, as I have already observed, was never one to loaf on the job. If she had gone off to these Helmstedters, it was undoubtedly because they were, in some way or other, involved in her investigation. In the taxi

which drove me out to Laubheim, the nearest village to the villa, I cudgled my brains in vain for an explanation of the mystery of her disappearance.

With Andresen already behind the bars, I knew it behooved me to be cautious. It was no use my walking blindly into a hornet's nest. Accordingly, having noticed in the village a garage with cars for hire, I paid off my taxi and dined at my leisure at the inn. It was nearly eight o'clock by the time I reached Laubheim, and I intended to wait until darkness fell—at that season and in that latitude not until around ten o'clock, as I knew—before reconnoitering. The landlord told me how to reach the villa—it was five minutes' walk through the woods which came down to the edge of the village; but he knew nothing of the Helmstedters. They were probably summer visitors—the Villa Waldesruhe was always rented for the season.

Well, it was not the first time I had played the burglar. The villa, hedged about with trees, with merely an oak palisade separating it from the forest, was wrapped in darkness and silence. It was only on going round to the rear that I caught a glimmer of light in a window of the upper of its two floors. I resolved to investigate that light.

A slight manipulation of a kitchen window, and I was inside. Profound silence, save for the thumping of my heart in my ears as, pistol in hand, I crept stealthily up the stairs. On the uncarpeted landing I paused, confronted by four closed doors. Enough daylight yet fell through the window on the landing to enable me to see my way; but I could distinguish no trace of the light I had perceived from outside.

Grabbing the handle of the door in front of me, I turned it swiftly and silently, thrusting the door wide. On the instant I recoiled and my hand, grasping my automatic, jerked instinctively upward.

An enormous man, clad in a dressing-gown over vest and trousers, stood silhouetted in the light of a table-lamp.

One glance at him and a thrill went tingling down my spine. Those ferocious eyes, peering out from under jutting, shaggy brows, that savage mouth, baring the teeth in a snarl as malignant as a tiger's, those long and powerful arms—no need to look downward for the monstrous boot protruding from under the folds of the ample robe. To cast eyes but once upon the Man with the Clubfoot was to forget him never. And the Parritt, poor little Parritt, was in his power—prisoner, as now I made no doubt, of this ruthless cripple whose name was a byword in the Secret Service of every European Power.

The realization of my hapless comrade's plight came to me in a flash. My voice was husky as I cried, "Put your hands up, Grunt!" At the sound of his name, the expression of the apelike face seemed to change. He had been glowering at me in stupified ire. But now the anger melted from his regard and his fleshy lips were twisted up in an impudent, cynical grin. Nevertheless he did my bidding, albeit reluctantly.

"So, so?" he muttered as he raised his great arms. "My young English friend, as I live! You've come for Miss Parritt, I'll wager?"

"She's here, then?" I cried eagerly.

"Certainly." He wagged his big head toward the left. "That's her room—the third door along. But she's out just now."

I was taking no chances with him. I did not deflect my gaze even when I heard a light footstep behind my back. Making sure that he had lied and that it was the Parritt running to meet me, I called sharply across my shoulder, "Stay where you are!" At the same instant some one leaped on me from behind, pinioning my arms in a grip so savage that I thought my elbows would crack. The pistol was plucked from my grasp and I was violently tossed against the wall. "You'll do there," spoke a voice. "And we'll have the hands up, if you please!"

Automatically I obeyed. A muscular youth at the head of the stairs was covering me with a revolver. Grunt had stooped to retrieve my pistol which had fallen to the floor. As he drew himself erect, I saw that he was shaking with laughter.

"Put your gun away, *lieber Helmstedter*," he chortled in his resonant bass. "You make me ashamed of our good German hospitality. Is this a way to welcome our English visitor? For he is welcome, *nicht wahr?*" And he broke, trumpeting, into a veritable tempest of stentorian, ogrelike guffaws.

Now his companion, a regular young Hercules in build, lowering his weapon, seemed to catch the infection and began to laugh in his turn. I stood there like a fool, staring bemused at the spectacle of those two lunatics doubled up with laughter, clapping one another on the back in the ecstasy of their mirth.

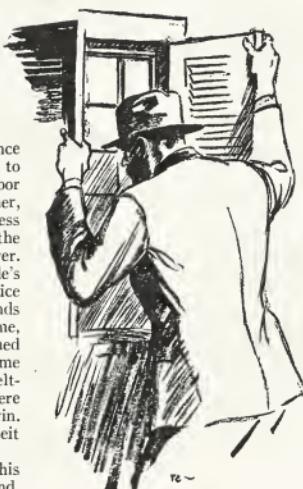
At last Clubfoot turned to me. "Hochverehrter Herr," he gasped, the tears running down his face. "You've come to rescue Miss Parritt, *nicht wahr?* You're welcome to her—if you can persuade her to go!"

"I don't know what the devil the joke is," I retorted crossly. "If Miss Parritt is detained here against her will, she'll want no persuading, believe me!"

This remark set them off again in a regular tornado of merriment. "You just try her, that's all," Helmstedter cackled. Then big Grunt heaved himself forward and laid an immense paw on my shoulder. "I see I must explain," he said, wiping his eyes. "I don't know whether you're aware of it, but your engaging colleague is somewhat judicious in her choice of acquaintances."

"Meaning Andresen?"

The great mouth shut like a trap. "Andresen, exactly. Of course, you would know about him. He was stubborn at first—oh, he's made a clean breast of everything now!—and it became urgent to find somebody who could throw some light on the gentleman's activities. My Master was keenly interested and you know that patience is not one of his virtues. At this moment the fact of Miss Parritt's visits to the beer-garden was reported to me. I immediately conjectured a connection between your revered Chief and her. Helmstedter here, one of the most promising of my lieutenants, had this villa for the summer. I instructed him, with the aid of his charming wife, to scrape acquaintance with your colleague and invite her to stay with them. The lady having ac-



A slight manipulation of a window, and I was inside.

Miss Parritt Disappears

cepted, nothing was simpler than for me to present myself later, in the guise of an old friend of this delightful couple."

I laughed. "Surely you don't kid yourself that Miss Parritt has never heard of *you*, Gründt?"

His eyes narrowed. "If she has, she concealed it. In any case, I didn't figure under my own name but as Professor Hans Traugott. I did everything in my power to make myself agreeable to her, to win her confidence—"

"Without the slightest result, I'll venture to say!"

Clubfoot grunted. "She was as tight as an oyster about Andresen, if that's what you mean. But for the rest, I succeeded only too well. *Verdamm't, man!*" he exploded, "the woman's in love with me now! She refuses to leave me!"

I gazed at him thoughtfully. This, of course, was one of the Parritt's tricks; but just what was her game? With an earnest mien Gründt possessed himself of my two hands.

"You've got to take her home, man! Do you understand me?" he cried irascibly. "She writes me verses: she tries to mother me. It's ridiculous at my age—and hers! I won't have it! Besides, she scares me—I've never met such determination in my life. You've got to rid me of this woman. You'll do this much for a colleague, *lieber Herr*?"

The sound of women's voices in the hall abruptly ended this sheerly preposterous interview. With a hollow cry of, "There she is now!" the redoubtable Man with the Clubfoot retired swiftly into his bedroom, slamming the door and locking it. Already Helmstedter was halfway down the stairs. I saw him grab one of the women who were there and whisk her off through a door. A figure, whose angular silhouette was all too familiar to me, remained behind.

Directly I set my eyes on her I knew that Gründt had spoken the truth, incredible though it was. She was transfigured: she was almost good-looking. She did not give me the chance to speak. "I know what you've come for, Clavering," she said. "But it's useless. You can tell the Chief I've kept faith with him. But I'm through. I've met the only man who has ever taken the trouble to understand me, and with him I intend to stay." She pressed her lips together firmly.

I goggled at her. "Have you taken leave of your senses?" I stormed. "You come here on a job, and the first thing you do is to get tied up with an enemy agent like Helmstedter. And not content with that, you proceed to fall in love with the head of the Kaiser's secret police. Or perhaps you'll tell me you've never heard of the Man with the Clubfoot?"

She sighed seraphically. "He didn't deceive me, though I let him think he did. I never suspected the Helmstedters, I admit: I thought they'd be a good cover. But my secret-service days are over, Clavering. A woman has the right to work out her salvation in her own way." Her face glowed. "And I've found mine. A wonderful man. I can bring a new happiness into his lonely life—"

"Like hell you can!" I told her. But there, what's the use? When I thought of the risk I had taken in breaking into that blinking villa to rescue her, I just saw red. I did not spare her—I gave her the brutal truth straight from the shoulder. Even so I had to argue with her for the best part of an hour before she would consent to accompany me back to England. And she sulked the whole way home.

The day after her arrival she sent in her resignation. The Chief did not know whether to laugh or cry. I never came across her again, but I heard she did useful work for the British Mission in the United States during the war.

One Bear —As Is!

Arcola understood too much about husbands, she thought; but when she found a black bear in her kitchen, she learned still more.

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

M R. CABOT POWELL, salt of the earth—and South for the first time—subscribed to the Fourteenth Amendment and the *Boston Transcript*. But neither of these seemed to fit in with the informal feudal system that he noticed around the confluence of the Tombigbee and Warrior rivers in southern Alabama, wherein the white overlord had the responsibility and the colored serf had the lunch and the leisure.

In the matter of the amendment, and all that lay back of it, Mr. Powell and his new friend Captain Edward Rogerville—late of the A. E. F., now of the Demopolis bar, and plantation-bred—disagreed amiably and at length. Against old arguments, Captain Ed advanced old experiences.

"Wait till you've been down here a while," he closed a discussion that had gone in circles.

A well-thought-out theory in rebuttal was interrupted by one of the "serfs" in question, Gladstone Smith by name. Gladstone—long, lank, and cigar-colored—was passing along Strawberry Street in a way to indicate something on his mind. As indeed there was: A swift survey as he shuffled into the Square was confirming his worst fears—that the crap game he was just leaving had gummed him all up. He was in a jam. In pawning Captain Ed Rogerville's washing after his wife Arcola had given it to him to deliver and collect for, for her, he had gained four dollars with which to enter the game, it was true. But in immediately losing the four therein and thereafter, he had made what was beginning to look increasingly like a fatal move. For now he couldn't bail the wash out. Things had doubled up on him, until he now owed Money-lender Samson G. Bates four dollars, Arcola seventy-five cents, and Cap'n Ed his clean clothes—any item of which could wreck a boy, if he should be suddenly called upon for money, clothes or explanations!

In fact, thinking about it ruined a planned all-day excursion to where a small circus train had been wrecked the day before, down near Linden. Gladstone would have liked to see that wreck, but there would be no pleasure in it now—or in anything else. Arcola understood too much about husbands, and Cap'n Ed understood all that a white man can about the Gladstonian type of mind.

So Gladstone took refuge in delay and masculine companionship of his own color. There was plenty of gathered about Jeff Baker's place, it proved, when he detoured widely around the white-folks' hotel and began to work his way back toward Baptist Hill.



Jeff was a small darky with big feet and an eye to business. The size of the assembled crowd around his front gate testified to the latter. Jeff was admitting its members at ten cents a head, to see a bear he had chained up in his back yard.

"Old canebrakes down de river full of b'ars—whut all de 'miration about?" Gladstone interrogated a friend, Frisco Johnson, who had been present among the onlookers since breakfast.

"Aint know, but a boy always spend out a dime to see a b'ar," Frisco touched bedrock.

"Aint it so! Sho is look like a good business, too," admired Gladstone. Pawnning the white-folks' wash to get in a crap game began to look highly speculative beside the sure income from Jeff's bear.

"Lend me two-bits; aims see him couple mo' times," suggested Frisco.

"Boy, is sand a nickel a load, I couldn't buy enough to make de spinach taste natu'al," demurred Gladstone sadly.

"Huccome?"

Gladstone told him.

"Now you *is* in a jam!" sympathized Mr. Johnson, "Married, too—dat make it wuss, 'count Arcola wantin' her sevumty-five cents fo' doin' all dat washin'."

"Rub it in!" mourned Gladstone. "But she aint no wuss'n Cap'n Ed gwine be—wантин' he wash!"

"Dis keep up, you liable have to git yo'se'f a job of work."

"Aint *no* job of work gimme four dollars an' sevumty-five cents fast as I gwine need it now," gloomed Gladstone.

"I done heared of a new place whar at a boy can git money," advanced Frisco thoughtfully.

"I done wore out all de *old ones*," admitted Mr. Smith disconsolately. "Whar it?"

"Dem new white-folks gent'man whut come to town—Mist' Powell, up on Commissioners Street."

"Means dat Boston gent'man?"

"Uh-huh. He lend Loose-Change Jackson a dollar last week."

"Uh-oh! Dat liable cure him of lendin'!"

"Maybe you better sell him somep'n, den," suggested Frisco helpfully.

"Dat liable go better," agreed Gladstone.

Which accounted for Mr. Cabot Powell having a visitor within the hour—a tall, dusky, gangling visitor, who paused to dust the front gate carefully with his hat before entering. A boy wanted to make a good impression—show that intellect, not indolence, was back of his being in the business he was.

"Mawnin', suh, Cap'n!" Gladstone led off.

"Good morning!" replied Mr. Powell, all courtesy and reserve.

Gladstone got on one foot, embarrassed. Quality-folks generally said, "Well, what the hell *do* you want now?" when he got this far in his campaigns, and put a boy at his ease.

"Cun'l," he was thus smoked out of a good prologue, "is you crave yo'se'f a good dawg?"

Mr. Powell checked over his needs thoughtfully. A dog had not previously been among them. Yet something in Gladstone's agonized salesmanship intrigued.

"Why should I buy a dog?" he voiced it.

Gladstone hit the right note without knowing it. "Gin'r'al," he promoted his hearer, and sounded it mournfully, "I jes' *bleeged* to sell dat dawg, on 'count de white folks pressin' me so hard. Sho hates to give him up."

Sympathy with the downtrodden stirred within Mr. Powell. For all that his friend Rogerville had said, he felt that the darky did not get a fair deal; and here was an individual case of it. One could be definitely helpful here!

"What kind of dog is it?"

"Bird-dawg. Sho p'ints a mean pa'tridge, suh."

"Well," considered Mr. Powell, "I might, in your case. Let me look at him."

Gladstone got down to business. Nothing might be so calculated to ruin his sale now as to show his goods first. Besides, he didn't have time to waste on details; Cap'n Ed was liable to get to asking Arcola how about his clean shirts, any minute now.

"Gin'r'al,"—he grew confidential,—"I aint got dat dawg right *wid* me, but I fotch him. Good bird-dawg. An' wuth de money—"

"How much money?"

Need dictated. "Fo' dollars, suh—fo' dollars sevumty-five cents, cash money. White-folks after me so hot I aint even got time go git de dawg first. Please, suh, gimme de money, an' I fotch de dawg so fast after dat de sidewalk smoke!"

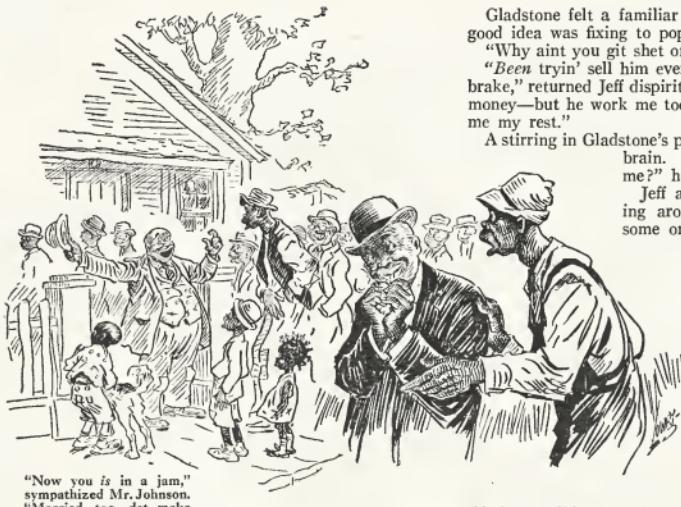
Cabot Powell looked into the transparent honesty limned in the face of a dusky brother in distress.

"Man to man, will you bring the dog if I let you have the money?" he put the only remaining question.

"Cross my heart an' hope to drap daid," acquiesced Gladstone solemnly. "Git you *two* dawgs, is you say so."

"One'll be plenty. By tonight, you say?"

"Yassuh! Tonight's right—jes' quick as fix up my business wid de white-folks. Cain't see me fo' de dust! So reliable I sweats!"



"Now you is in a jam,"
sympathized Mr. Johnson.
"Married, too—dat make
it wuss!"

Mr. Powell contemplated the back of a reliable man made happy; the beautiful response of trustworthiness when trusted. And he had never seen a seller so anxious to hasten delivery of the goods, irrespective of the fact that he had been paid in advance. Ed Rogerville certainly was wrong!

Gladstone Smith hit Baptist Hill in the same warm glow that possibly pervades a partner in a big financial house when he has engineered the successful refinancing of a kingdom. You could get a smart man into trouble, but you couldn't keep him there, was Gladstone's general idea. True, he had so far only added the new Boston white-folks to his list of liabilities, but that would soon be offset by the promised delivery of the dog. And Gladstone had intended from the first to deliver him. Open and above-board, that was Gladstone!

But now he had four dollars and seventy-five cents in his pocket; a novel sensation that a boy would fain enjoy for a brief time. The peace which overlay Hogan's Alley indicated that Arcola had not yet heard of the fate of Cap'n Ed Rogerville's wash; the latter had been pawned to Samson for forty-eight hours, and Captain Ed evidently hadn't been around asking any questions, or there would be more disturbance on the Hill than the current quietude bespoke. So all was still well upon the Tombigbee!

Gladstone breathed a long sigh of relief, and again joined the growing throng before Jeff Baker's front fence. Jeff's bear was apparently still playing to a crowded house, with rumors of a lodge delegation from Uniontown already en route to see it.

Jeff himself stood at the gate and took in the dimes for admission. Gladstone eyed the sag in Jeff's coat on the side where he pouched them.

"Old b'ar work a boy to death!" complained Jeff. He looked nervous.

"What de matter wid him?" Gladstone asked sympathetically.

"Aint nothin' matter wid de b'ar. Picks him keerful. Trouble is, eve'ybody craves see him. Done wore me all out takin' in de money!"

Gladstone felt a familiar sensation in his brain, like a good idea was fixing to pop out of it.

"Why aint you git shet of him, den?" he queried.

"Been tryin' sell him ever since I git him out de cane-brake," returned Jeff dispiritedly. "He make me plenty of money—but he work me too hard takin' it in. Cain't git me my rest."

A stirring in Gladstone's pocket joined the stirring in his brain. "How 'bout sellin' him to me?" he suggested.

Jeff acted like he had been standing around all morning waiting for some one to say that.

"How much you wants fo' him?" Gladstone followed up his hunch. Old air was fixing to get full of dimes—pay everybody, bail out Cap'n Ed's wash, get back in that crap game—

"How much you got?" Jeff interrupted his flights of fact and fancy.

"Fo' sev'nty-five—"

"Done bought yo'se'f a b'ar! As is!" Jeff closed, with an alacrity

Gladstone did not understand until later. "Pay me de rest after he make it fo' you—fo' sev'nty-five down; five dollars an' two-bits next week. Sells him to you fo' ten dollars, dat way, as is—includin' de chain."

Gladstone paid. Then a question arose: "How I gwine git de b'ar to my place?"

"Takes him fo' you. I aint skeered of no b'ar."

With Jeff and his ex-bear halfway to Hogan's Alley, a new thought swept over the sterile plain of Gladstone's intellect. He was all the time thinking of something too late! If that bear arrived at his home in advance of explanations, Arcola was liable to have to be reckoned with. Nothing with fleas and fur appealed to Arcola. And even bears from the wilds of the river-bottom cane-brakes were liable to come to grief, once Arcola let her hat slide down over her forehead and grabbed up anything loose around the house.

On the other hand, if Gladstone went home now, she would be wanting that seventy-five cents for Cap'n Ed's washing, and disinclined to take an equity in a bear in full settlement.

Which in turn reminded him that everything was up to the bear now—Samson's four dollars, Arcola's six-bits, and Jeff's balance-due—while all his money was tied up in the bear! It was getting as confusing as the Wicker-sham Report. Only thing that wasn't involved so far was the dog for Mr. Cabot Powell—paid for but not delivered. . . . Which ponderings put a boy in no shape mentally for the job now facing him at home!

Shuffling nervously along behind the bear shambling in Jeff's wake, Gladstone voiced this important afterthought. "How 'bout puttin' de brakes on dat b'ar twel I tells Arcola he comin'?" he ventured uncertainly.

"B'ar all wore out from comin' to town from de—from canebrakes now," hesitated Jeff. "He aint makin' no time now. You git on ahead and splanify to her about de b'ar befo' me and him gits dar."

Gladstone liked the idea better than its execution. Arcola, when he came in sight of his domicile, was boiling clothes in a pot over a fire in the back yard, her hat too low over her eyes for Gladstone's safety. She weighed a lot, but was fast with her mouth, muscles, and missiles.

"Whar at de sevumty-five cents from Cap'n Ed fo' de washin'?" she greeted her lord—and masterd.

"C-C-Cap'n Ed say he gwine give it to me dis evenin'," he dissebled feebly.

"She be good thing fo' *you*, is he do it," countered Arcola skeptically.

Gladstone couldn't remember a worse time to tell her about his buying a bear.

"Jeff comin' up de road dis way," he essayed an indirect approach to a delicate subject.

"Next to you, aint nobody I hates to see comin' wuss dan dat Jeff!" Arcola covered that point fully and forcefully.

"Jeff got a b'ar wid him—"

"Got *which*?"

Old bear didn't sound welcome, either!

"B'ar—on a chain."

"Well, let him *have* de b'ar! Aint no skin off my nose! What I keer 'bout de b'ar?"

Gladstone looked about him wretchedly, and saw that he would have to talk fast. Jeff and the bear were already in sight.

"I—I done bought de b'ar," he heard somebody else saying words that were bound to prove practically fatal to him.

Arcola whirled belligerently, one hand reaching for her hat, the other for a stick of firewood near by.

"Say dat some mo'!" she invited.

Only there wasn't anybody left listening. Gladstone was instantly off on a job of personal life-saving on the hoof, bear-bound.

"Arcola done change my mind 'bout dat b'ar!" he met the oncoming Jeff just outside the danger zone. "Craves me my fo' sevumty-five back."

Jeff was apparently too busy tying the bear to Gladstone's fence just inside his front gate, to hear him. "You takes him on in from here," he steered the discussion around Gladstone's weak-kneed proposal. "Don't try come tellin' *me* you backin' out on yo' own prop'sition, beca'ze you aint! Is you married Arcola, dat you an' de b'ar's hard luck!"

"Woof!" said the bear.

"You gwine need bigger *woofs* dan dat, is Arcola git after you, b'ar!" Gladstone commented in a hasty survey of his business which included both the bear and the immediate future. He still had to deliver a dog, too.

"Whar at old Bozo?" he hailed Arcola from a safe distance.

"Same place as my sevumty-five cents is, whut you better come clean wid, I 'spect's!" returned Arcola grimly from her labors. "Boys done borerred him to take over in Miss'ippi huntin', dey say. I git on all right, is dat dawg aint *never* come back!"

Gladstone collapsed in a new place. He had sold Bozo to the Boston gentleman, sight unseen. And now Bozo was A.W.O.L., and unavailable, with any possible refund-money all tied up in the bear. Unless Mr. Cabot Powell would also take an equity in the bear in lieu of a bird-dog—which seemed somewhat improbable—Gladstone was in a new jam! He recalled his recommendations, his eulogies

of the bird-dog; remembered Mr. Powell's confidence in him, a confidence that should not be betrayed. No honorable man would fail the white-folks now, while already the shades of night were falling fast, when the dog was due. And, clean shirts or no clean shirts, the feet of Gladstone forthwith fell fast too—on the pavements in the direction of the home of Cap'n Ed Rogerville. After all, there was nothing like a boy's own white-folks when his business got in a real jam like this . . .

It wasn't the dog, so much, as the principle of the time, Mr. Cabot Powell was telling himself on his veranda in the soft Southern darkness that evening. In effect, he had bet four dollars and seventy-five cents that Captain Edward Rogerville was wrong about the unreliability and irresponsibility of what were undeniably one's brothers under the skin. The Golden Rule hadn't been repealed; and neither did it have to be stretched to cover certain racial idiosyncrasies as these Southerners seemed to think, was the conviction of Mr. Powell of Massachusetts. And he had set out to prove it—with a four-dollar-and-seventy-five-cent advance-payment on a dog, so to speak.

But a tiny glimmer of anxiety about it now was beginning to appear on his horizon as the dusk fell, dogless. Ed Rogerville might have a slight tendency to crow superiority—

Then doubt was dispelled, its unworthiness divulged, by the now-familiar appearance of an elongated figure at the gate, dragging behind him an unwilling canine.

"Git on in an' say howdy to yo' new white-folks, dawg!" his captor was exhorting him earnestly from the front end of the leash. And: "I gotch him, boss!" Gladstone was making triumphant announcement from the walk below the steps a moment later.

"So I see!" There was gratification, justification for confidence well-placed, in the tones of Mr. Cabot Powell, yet with a note in them indicating that it was the deed rather than the dog that prompted it. Cabot Powell of Massachusetts had scored a point in his argument with Edward Rogerville of Alabama!

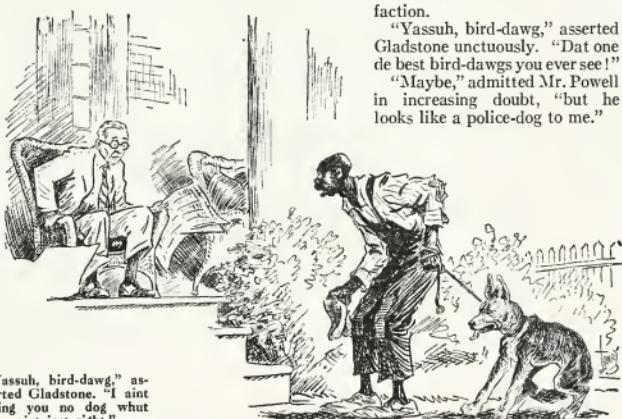
Yet to Gladstone's momentary dismay it developed that there was still something wrong. White-folks from up North were hard to suit—for closer inspection was bringing out that if this were a bird-dog he was highly adulterated. Size, shape, and architecture were all against him.

"I thought you said you were selling me a bird-dog?"

Mr. Powell voiced his dissatisfaction.

"Yassuh, bird-dawg," asserted Gladstone unctuously. "Dat one de best bird-dawgs you ever see!"

"Maybe," admitted Mr. Powell in increasing doubt, "but he looks like a police-dog to me."



"Yassuh, bird-dawg," asserted Gladstone. "I aint bring you no dog whut aint jest right."

"Yassuh, sho is *look* dat way," agreed Gladstone amiably. "Dese here Alabama bird-dawgs fool you, is you aint used to 'em. Dis here dawg one de best bird-dawgs round! I aint bring you no dawg whut aint jes' right. So reliable I sweats. You jes' call him Bozo."

"Well, tie Bozo up to the porch here. I'm looking for company. I'll attend to him after a while. Just let him be getting used to me now."

"Yassuh! Dat all he crave—jes' to git used to you. —Here, you Bozo—c'mon up here!"

THIRTY years' experience had taught Gladstone when to close a conversation with the white-folks, before some new subject got brought up. Colonel Powell here had his dog and Gladstone had his four seventy-five—even though it *was* all tied up in a bear! Old bear was going to pay all of Gladstone's bills now, anyhow. Gladstone blended diplomatically with the darkness in the direction of Hogan's Alley. Sooner or later, he was going to have to get right with Arcola about that bear, and possibly times had grown better since he left.

But they hadn't.

A fleet gossip-monger from the Hill, locally and colloquially known as "Wormholes" Ford, met him saucered, with news of the disaster.

"Arcola done run yo' b'ar off wid a broom! He loose on de Hill somewhars now, eatin' eve'ybody up!" Wormholes adored a tale that was bad enough at best.

Gladstone's heart skipped two beats and then apparently went to skipping a rope. He knew Arcola—it was just like her. And it sure did make a boy's legs limber to realize that he was responsible for a bear on a rampage!

Besides, he had four dollars and seventy-five cents tied up in that bear. And a first mortgage held by Jeff Baker for five dollars and a quarter on him too! Suppose somebody shot him!

A lot of things loomed. Paying off Mr. Cabot Powell with that dog still hadn't done anything about fixing up Arcola's seventy-five cents, Samson's four dollars, and Cap'n Ed Rogerville's wash! All those also depended on his straightening out this bear matter now! A boy didn't prop up one side of his business good before somebody kicked the pillars out from under it on the other!

Shuffling in the wake of Wormholes, he ran into more and confirmatory evidence. Baptist Hill was afoot and abol! Gladstone's bear was excitedly reported as having been seen in four separate places simultaneously. The roster of those eaten by him lengthened, complicated by their later appearance in the flesh and in high speed. Room beneath buildings and 'n culverts commanded premiums. Trees went bare and begging before the rumor that bears could climb.

In the midst of all which, there was a stranger reported in the streets—a rough, out-of-town-looking white-folks—in search of Jeff Baker, following anxious inquiries, a search baffled by the fact that, darky-fashion, even Jeff's best friends wouldn't tell him that they had ever even heard of Jeff before!

Up on Commissioners Street, meantime, Mr. Cabot Powell sat and smoked on his veranda in the warm March darkness, unaware of the tumult and the shouting far off on Baptist Hill about a bear. Mr. Powell was awaiting a caller. Captain Ed Rogerville had intimated that he would be over later in the evening for a round of joint-reminiscence about Belleau Wood.

Bozo, knowing a gentleman regardless of geography, crouched motionless beside his new master's chair, and fell short of looking like a bird-dog.

A car stopped at the gate, and Captain Rogerville was coming up the gravelled walk.

Then the dog went wild—leaping, tugging, straining at his leash, uttering yelps of unmistakable meaning.

"He seems to know you," commented Powell, as he drew back a chair.

"He ought to—I've owned him for four years."

"You? You? You've owned him? For four years?"

"Sure. What'd he do—come visiting and dig up the flower-beds?"

But Mr. Cabot Powell of Boston seemed to be having difficulties.

"You mean that that's *your* dog? Bozo—your bird-dog?" he struggled with them.

"Bozo? Bird-dog? His name's Fritz, imported police-dog from Germany. But he sure is my dog—aren't you, Fritz, old boy?"

And Fritz's answer left no doubts upon his ownership—but a big cloud upon Gladstone's dog-deal!

Seeing the effect of which upon his host, Captain Ed Rogerville, from the depths of long experience, sensed far off some Ethiopian in his friend's woodpile.

"Where'd you get him, old man?" he lifted aside the first stick.

But Mr. Cabot Powell of Massachusetts was taking a short cut to a conclusion, swallowing a bitter pill like a man!

"Ed," he voiced it heatedly, "the Constitution's got too damned many amendments!"

"I've always felt the Eighteenth was a mistake—"

"You're four ahead of me! I mean the Fourteenth! It's *out*! Here I treat that scalawag like a gentleman! Advance him the price of a dog he comes offering me for later delivery—a *bird*-dog, he says! And just when I'm wondering if you aren't right about their general irresponsibility, after all, here comes this Gladstone in the gate to bolster up my belief in him again, with—*your* dog! Stolen from *you*, my best friend here, to sell to *me*! I'll fix him if—"

But the wrath and disillusionment of Massachusetts was lost, drowned in the mirth of Alabama—to terminate at length in the invitation:

"Come on in my car, Cabot, and let's go get him!"

AS Gladstone meanwhile had neared his own neighborhood, current clamor increased; it seemed to be centering in his own house. Howls that would have done credit to a regiment of banshees jarred the welkin round about. The iron clothes-boiling pot in the yard was overturned, its fire scattered. The henhouse was upset. Frantic bangings, gruntings, and squallings from within the house itself mingled with awed, "Gawd he'p de b'ar!" from skittish neighbors who knew Arcola.

Gladstone edged into their midst. Wasn't anybody had a bigger interest in that bear than he! Ten dollars' worth, counting the mortgage; while something told him he wasn't near through with Messrs. Powell and Rogerville yet. . . . Not to speak of the rest of it. This bear *still* had a heap to pull a boy out of!

A yell from within curdled his blood and wiped out memory of his business deals. The banging and grunting redoubled. Cautiously, frog-eyed with fear, Gladstone sidled toward the back door, while the spectators froze breathless at their fence-top posts.

Down the alley came the rough-looking out-of-town white-folks, his interest apparently increasing at every step. He broke into a run as he saw Gladstone thrust an inquiring head around his own door-jamb from the outside, and stand apparently thunderstruck at what he saw within.

Gladstone well might be. For Arcola, for all of her two hundred and forty pounds of weight and globular

shape, was clinging wildly and volubly to the chain in mid-ceiling from which once had hung an oil lamp.

Banging blindly about beneath her, its head wedged immovably into a tin lard can of inadequate entrance-diameter, where Arcola kept her sugar, was the returned bear! Disordered household goods and gods lay all about, while a pile of hot coals in the floor, from the over-turned stove, had just begun to flame.

But at this instant luck began to turn—for Gladstone, if not for the bear. With a despairing shriek, Arcola lost her hold, to crash devastatingly downward upon that unfortunate animal with a mutual "Oooof!" that brought the rough-looking white man from without on the run.

But not before Gladstone had leaped to heroic rescue! With a turn of the bear's chain about a bedpost, he snubbed his property close up to it, and clung panting there while Arcola sat upon the floor, flabbergasted and agast at his daring.

"Po' some sawtter on de fire in de flo'! Whut you settin' dar like a fool fo'?" snapped her lord. "Want bu'n up de house on top all de other dam'ges de b'ar done done?"

So it was in the hiss and steam of extinguishment that the neighbors now came crowding close upon the heels of the ex-cited white stranger—a stranger demanding, ere he had well-crossed the threshold:

"Where's my bear? Where's my bear?"

Gladstone, figuratively, went over Niagara in a barrel at the possessive pronoun used. His business was bad enough without anybody taking that bear away from him! He was all tied up in that bear. Besides, look at his house!

"Yeah, look at de b'ar! Look at de b'ar!" he gave tongue idiotically in his anguish.

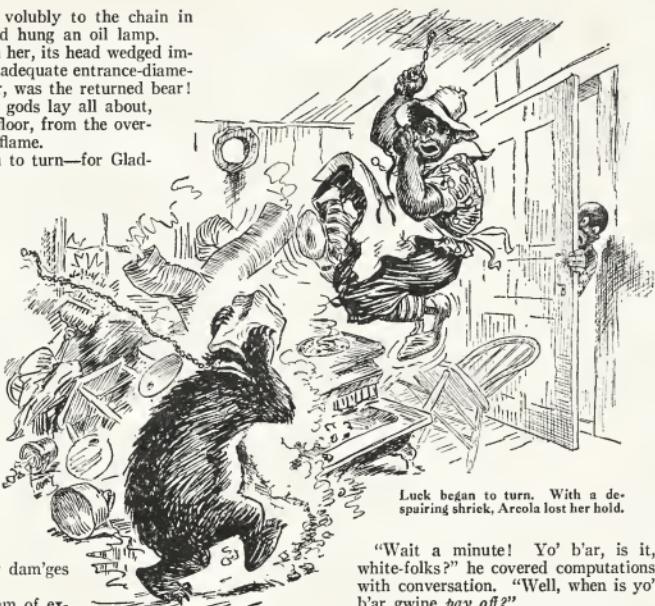
Something in this new white-folks' look and language nevertheless all too plainly indicated the worst—that the perfidious Jeff had come by this bear he had sold Gladstone just as Gladstone had come by the dog he had sold Mr. Powell. Which wiped out Jeff's title in and mortgage on the bear, but also wiped out Gladstone's equity in him too!

"—Been looking for him ever since our circus train got wrecked!" the new arrival let in a lot of light on a previously dark subject. "Come here, Beppo!"

"Woof!" said Beppo despairingly from his lard can.

Gladstone's eyelids were flapping foolishly, like window-shades in a high wind. His mouth had fallen open, exposing his tonsils to drafts. And now, as the grand finale to losing Cap'n Ed's wash, Arcola's tolerance and seventy-five cents, and his equity in the bear, he had his house half wrecked and set on fire! With no telling how that dog business with a couple of white gentlemen was yet coming out! Things looked black indeed.

Until out of despair suddenly shone victory! He had it! The white-folks should yet see that he was reliability itself; that he merely got his business—and his livestock—temporarily in a jam sometimes! No bear, meantime, could come into his house and mess everything all up!



Luck began to turn. With a de-spurring shriek, Arcola lost her hold.

"Wait a minute! Yo' b'ar, is it, white-folks?" he covered computations with conversation. "Well, when is yo' b'ar gwine pay off?"

"Pay off? For what?" puzzled the bear's evident true proprietor.

"Fo' de wash-pot, dat whut! Two bucks! Fo' messin' up de henhouse, two bucks! Fo' tu'nin' over de stove, a dollar! Fo' busting up de fu'n'ture, two bucks! Three bucks fo' setting de house on fire!"

Gladstone sounded like a good man to stop, before he began to run into big money.

"Fifteen dollars, then, and call it square?" the bear's owner was suddenly making a cash-in-hand offer.

Gladstone checked not his damages but his liabilities. "Gimme it so I can git sevumty-five cents out of it," he accepted settlement.

And bear and stranger were gone.

Arcola's jaw dropped, as Gladstone thrust a five-dollar bill and seventy-five cents in silver into her amazed hand.

"Fo' doin' Cap'n Ed's washin'—an' don't git s'picious now me no mo' or I bust you one!" he explained the latter; "—and fo' bustin' up de house," the former.

Arcola's eye lit on the remaining currency, then—more softly—on the heroic husband who, after all, had indubitably saved her from the bear. A block away, Gladstone saw her better nature win, as she laid down the stick of firewood she had picked up. Besides, he still had too much unfinished business on hand to mess with wives! He had to see a couple of white-folks first!

"Gimme back dem clean clothes, Samson," he was lifting his collateral from the money-lender of the Hill, five minutes and four blocks later. "Got to rush 'em over to Cap'n Ed's befo' I hands back dat Nawth'ren gent'man de money fo' dawg whut he buys from me by mistake: aint no bird-dawg to him, I done find out. Reliable, dat me all over! . . . And still I got fo'-bits, and whut Cap'n Ed owe Arcola, left! Gangway fo' de gallopin' dominoes, den, boy—and I's Frawgbottom-bound, to git back in dat crap-game while my luck's quit roostin' low!"

The River Mystery

Another deeply interesting exploit in detection by the old Southern sheriff introduced to you by Mr. Walker in "Dead Man's Hand."

By EWING WALKER

Illustrated by Monte Crews

A MILE below Minniesburg—which makes it just about where old Cosgrove Landing used to be before the Civil War (or, as we'd rather have you say, the War between the States)—the Big Bend starts. The river, broad and muddy and ponderous, rolls along in grave decorum till it reaches the Big Bend; and then, of a sudden, it takes on a startling sprightliness and goes swirling and flouncing around the curving shore till the willows sway as in a gale and foul-lipped suckholes are born and go twisting and writhing out across the surface. It's just about a mile from the beginning of the Big Bend to its end; and around the whole of it the river scurries in unseemly blitheness. Once it has straightened again, it falls back into its decorous gait, much as would a portly man of sober years sprint a short way and then, a little shame-facedly, slow down for breath.

The boys of Minniesburg like the Big Bend—though most parents forbid them going there—because the river uses it as a dumping-ground, casting up all manner of intriguing things; there is always to be had the best of driftwood, which makes a better imitation cigar even than grapevine—though it smarts the eyes and burns the tongue more. Too, the boys like to go there because to them it is a world complete within itself, with the drab, workaday world of interfering and misunderstanding grown-ups generously hidden by the curving willow-fringed shore.

Private Tobe Elliott, Sheriff and tax collector, likes the Big Bend because—as he'll tell you—it's the swimming-ground of a great and patriarchal yellow-bellied catfish he's been unsuccessfully trying to hook for a matter of ten years; and because—as he will not tell you—he can sit there upon a half-buried, sun-bleached log and fetch very close and very clear the dimming days so far behind him.

Why Slade Broome liked the Big Bend I do not know; but there he secured his shanty-boat, and there he stayed a matter of months.

The first we knew of Broome came from a line of darkies unloading watermelons from Cap'n Porter's old stern-wheel river boat. As you may or may not know, melons are effectively unloaded only to the accompaniment of rhythmic song. At times, it is an old familiar air or croon; as often, it is an impromptu song—sometimes grotesque, sometimes a shade unclean and often plaintive.

A great-shouldered negro, his black face gleaming with sweat and eyes half-closed but alert, tossed a melon to the next in line:

"Shanty-boat a-floatin' by de dep-po bar," his mellow voice rolled across the water.

"Oh-h-h, La-a-awa," responded the others in the line.

"Who you reckon settin' on dat boat out dar?" sang another leader, to be answered by all with:

"Oh, La-a-a-wd! He bettah make fo' sho' wid his steerin' sweep; 'cause Ol' Muddy's riled an' pow'ful deep—

"Oh-h-h, a-La-a-awd / A-oo-oo, hoo-oo!"

Halfway between shore and midstream, an aging shanty-boat was slowly drifting by. At the stern stood a woman, her head and feet bare, one arm resting upon a sweep-oar and her scanty garments pressed to her by the wind from off the river. Even at that distance, she seemed, somehow, with her narrow, drooping shoulders and her eyes straight ahead—though she must have been curious—a furtive, abject sort of being.

At the bow of the boat was a man, also bare as to feet and head and, I saw, long and lank of body and limb. He leaned over with arms indolently resting upon the boat's rail; his faded denim overalls were rolled to the flat calves of his thin legs, which were idly crossed.

Opposite Cap'n Porter's boat he straightened. "What town's this?" came floating over the water.

One of us upon the shore cupped hands about mouth. "Min—nies—burg. Light an' show your saddle!"

A negro crooned a gibing line; a kingfisher flashed by; the shanty-boat, across whose cabin, in peeling and fading letters, appeared the word *Moonbeam*, placidly drifted on.

It was Private Tobe Elliott who discovered the shanty-boat *Moonbeam* had tied up to a leaning sycamore tree down at the Big Bend.

"Sure hope he don't get my old pahdner," he ambiguously opened up to me.

"What old partner?"

"That old yellowbelly catfish I been flirtin' with for the longes', down at the Big Bend."

"Who's liable to get him?"

"Slade Broome."

"Who's Slade Broome?"

"Slade Broome? Why, he's got him a shanty-boat—calls it the *Moonbeam*—and he's gone and tied up down at the Big Bend; right slap-dab at old Yellowbelly's front door, as you might say."

"Fisherman?"

"Fisherman?" Private Tobe sucked in his lips. "Son, he just motions to 'em, and they starts whinin' and crawls right up on the bank to him." He glanced away. "And, son—he's got him a wife."

Something in his voice made me wonder. "Well, a lot of men have," I replied.

Apparently he did not hear me. "Yep, he's got him a wife"—this last slowly, as he turned away and made toward the courthouse.

Slade Broome was a fisherman, all right. Each day or two he came into town with a basket of catfish or buffalo upon either arm or with a great string of them over his shoulder. And more than once I saw Private Tobe narrowly, and I thought a little fearfully, eying the man's catch. I knew he was looking to see whether old Yellowbelly was there.

Slade Broome was bound to cause plenty of talk in Minniesburg, which is a neighborly, home-baking sort of town

where, while minding our own business, we do make it a point at least to keep posted on the businesses of others. None knew whence he had come nor whither he was bound; but we speculated enough upon both points as we noted his long, spare body and his oversized bare splay feet and his strangely long, thin neck. I think the man's silence must have added more fuel to our wonderment than did all else. He would pass along the streets peddling his fish and announcing his approach with a muffled blast upon a small hunting-horn; when he paused to make a sale, he was chary enough in his use of words, never wasting one, the while staring straight before him; he never glanced into your eyes at all, but, rather, stared straight before him as one might have whose thoughts were a long way off. I've seen him, more than once, enter a store, make a purchase, pay for it and leave with never a word crossing his long thin lips. He would but point to an article, pause till the merchant named its price, draw from his pocket his deep leather purse, and handing over the amount, silently leave.

Talk of him? Of course we talked of him. We've too little that's diverting not to make the most of that little.

So far as I know, his wife never set foot within the town. Now and again some man or boy who had been to the Big Bend, would report seeing her frail, dowdy figure silently moving about the deck or cabin of the *Moonbeam*, or chopping driftwood upon the shore near by, her narrow shoulders bowed, her eyes toward the ground. With the exception of the fishing, all work incident to life upon the *Moonbeam* was done by her—which was as it should have been, according to shanty-boat standards.

Only one man among us ever heard the sound of her voice. Naturally enough, that man was Private Tobe. His fishing-pole over his shoulder and what he hoped would prove alluring bait in a small paper bag, he made his way to the Big Bend for another try at old Yellowbelly. He perched himself upon a limb of an uprooted tree, baited his hook, spat upon it—you must always do this if you'd have good luck—dropped it into the water and sat back leisurely to fish or pleasantly to ruminant. In the whole of this, he was unobserved by those upon the *Moonbeam*, for he had approached from the landward side; and the *Moonbeam* itself was hidden from him by the curvature of the river's bank, save for a foot or two of its stern.

Of a sudden, there came to Private Tobe from the direction of the shanty-boat a strange sound. It might have been the voice of a fretful child, or the sound made by a novice sucking upon a turkey-call, or by a chip of resin rubbed upon a fiddle-string. It was a raucous, familiar sound, and yet a sound that, try as he might, Private Tobe could not identify.

And then a man's voice reached him—voice that was nasal and high-pitched; a voice vibrant with anger and one that Tobe did not know: "Give him here! I'm tired o' listenin'—"

"No!" It was a woman's voice this time. "No! You get away from me, Slade Broome! I'm goin' to keep him. It's little enough I got, Gawd knows; and you sha'n't—"

Private Tobe didn't hear any more. He was scrambling, as spryly as his old limbs permitted, from his fallen tree, and making for the shanty-boat. He hoped old Yellowbelly

would not take an unsportsmanlike advantage of his absence and carry off his line and pole, thus again having the laugh on him. And then he rounded the center of the Big Bend's arc and before him was the aging *Moonbeam* sluggish tugging at its leash-ropes.

At the bow was the woman, her back pressed against the boat's rail, as though she had retreated there and could go no farther; it seemed to Private Tobe that in her manner fear and defiance were struggling for the upper hand. Her eyes, usually so spiritless, for the moment flashed bravely above their bluish pouches, but her bloodless lips quivered; her bare feet were defiantly spread, but the bony fingers of one hand desperately clutched at the breast of her shabby calico dress.

Slade Broome leaned toward her, his long body tense, one hand clutched at his side while with the other he pointed toward that which the woman held from him. And at the sight of that which she so jealously held, Private Tobe's lips came together, his eyes widened, and something stole into his throat. In the woman's hand was a small home-made willow cage, and in the cage was a pet crow.

Whether the woman's expression or the raucous voice of the crow revealed his presence, Private Tobe could not know; but slowly the man turned and silently eyed him.

Private Tobe smiled. "Folks, howdy!" He made a step toward the ladder leading to the boat's deck. "Ma'am, I'd be proud to have a look at your pet. When I was a boy, I had—" Perhaps she did not hear him, for he strove to speak kindly and, to do that, spoke low. At any rate, the crude cage pressed to her body, she hastily crossed the narrow deck and disappeared into the small cabin of the dingy *Moonbeam*.



"No!" It was a woman's voice. "You get away from me, Slade Broome! I'm goin' to keep him."

Private Tobe faced his host, smiling. "I was just doin' a little fishin' up the bank a piece and wondered did you have any crawfish."

Broome stared toward the distant bank of the river "No."

A long moment Private Tobe eyed him. "Well, now, that's just too bad. Reckon I'll have to make out with what I got. See you when I see you." And he started back toward his fallen tree, and old Yellowbelly, and his cogitations.

Probably old Yellowbelly could have stolen his bait without the old man noticing it, for he held his pole listlessly and, head low and moistening his lips now and again, peered across the swirling water. He was not thinking of fishing but rather of a woman, a piteously abject woman—who, seemingly, would run the risk of manhandling for the sake of a mere raucous-voiced pet crow; he was thinking of that woman's voice, redolent of desperate fear and of fearful defiance, and of that posture of desperate courage combined with cringing fear.

As the weeks passed, Broome peddled his fish along the streets of Minniesburg with silent, unflagging regularity; and Private Tobe now and then reported—with what struck me as a strange expression—getting a glimpse of Broome's wife as the Private fished for old Yellowbelly. Once or twice boys told of seeing her row the *Moonbeam's* small boat along the river, evidently in quest of some floating object. Each time the small boys saw her and each time Private Tobe saw her, in her hand or by her side—as though she were guarding a cherished thing—was her small willow cage holding her raucous-voiced crow.

Then came a day in late September when Slade Broome, for once in his life of reticence, became all but voluble.

Private Tobe Elliott, about one-thirty of the afternoon and after a hearty meal of river catfish—but not old Yellowbelly—slowly climbed the worn steps of the courthouse, leisurely made his way along the corridor and turned in at the door bearing the legend **SHERIFF AND TAX COLLECTOR**.

It was an uncommonly warm day, even for September, so he tossed his alpaca coat upon a littered table, drew his hide-bottom rocking-chair to a point where he would escape the shaft of hot sunlight streaming in through a window, wheezingly seated himself, loosened his collar and after unfastening his shoes, folded his hands upon his lap and closed his eyes. I report the procedure in detail, for it is one that is ceremoniously gone through with and that is an integral part of Private Tobe's daily routine.

His thoughts could have dwelt but a very little while upon new schemes for outwitting old Yellowbelly or upon other subjects of absorbing interest when Slade Broome entered Private Tobe's office and, his hands slowly opening and closing, confronted that somnolent county official. Once and again and a third time, Broome moistened his lips; then, staring through the window:

"Sheriff," he muttered, "somethin's happened to my wife."

Slowly, Private Tobe straightened. "What you mean, somethin's happened to your wife?"

Broome swallowed. "Yesterday evenin', long 'bout five o'clock or so, she went out in the skiff; and"—he paused momentarily—"she never come back."

"Yesterday—evenin'?" slowly and somewhat wonderingly Private Tobe repeated. "How come you just reportin' all this?"

"I been huntin' for her." His voice was toneless.

Private Tobe's hands slowly stroked the arms of his rocker. "Did you find her?"

A long moment the man's teeth pressed his lower lip; and during that moment Private Tobe came to feel that after all the man might know the meaning of grief.

"None; but I found—the skiff."

"Where at?"

"Just about two mile below the Bend. It had got hung up in a drift."

"Nothin' in it?"

"Nothin'." The man's voice was low and all but tremulous, as that of a man in the grip of sorrow.

"Well, we better go take a look." And Private Tobe Elliott, again a little wheezingly, bent over to lace his shoes...

A month passed. Private Tobe would have told you he had worked upon the case zealously enough; but if he made any discoveries or unearthed any promising clues, neither he nor his office confided those facts to any.

The whole of it happened at a time peculiarly inopportune for Private Tobe. He had been Sheriff more years than a good many of us could recall; he wanted to be Sheriff again. It was beginning to look as though he might not be Sheriff again.

For one thing, the Minniesburg *Weekly Bugle* was having plenty to say about what it termed the "Broome Murder Mystery," and in no uncertain terms was demanding the apprehension of the perpetrator of that heinous crime—this also in the words of the *Bugle*. As weeks passed and Private Tobe continued placidly fishing for old Yellowbelly down at the Big Bend, while his office announced no developments in the Broome case, the *Bugle*, in just about each issue, said things about Private Tobe calculated to bring him neither votes nor peace of mind.

When one is running for office in Cooper County, it's right handy—as Private Tobe would say—to have the *Bugle* behind one—for its notes, dulcet or blatant, have a way of rolling along all the valleys and of bounding over all the hills and of racing across all the prairies, until finally they enter just about every house and cabin in Cooper County; and as we are what you might term conscientious readers—skimming over nothing from the advertisements to the nice succulent, many-syllabled words of the editorial column—we are bound to be more or less impressed when the *Bugle* hints that Private Tobe is indolent, procrastinating, criminally passive, antiquated in his methods, rusty from too-long tenure of office, careless, slipshod and, finally too old for the vitally important office of Sheriff. I quote only a few of the adjectives of which the *Bugle's* editor availed himself.

He didn't accuse Private Tobe of cowardice or dishonesty—nobody has ever done that—and he didn't explain (for the good reason that he did not know) that Private Tobe regarded the Sheriff's office in a way that was just about unique. To Tobe the office was a sacred trust. For a good many years, folks had sort of naturally come to regard him as the custodian of that post. Yes, sir, it wouldn't seem natural to enter the Sheriff's office and not see Private Tobe settin' there—he could contemplate himself impersonally enough

—in his old hide-bottom rocking-chair, with his shoes unlaced and, maybe, if business was sort of slack, dozing a bit now and then. Too old? Shucks! He was just gettin' good.

Yes, he wanted to be Sheriff again—to keep on being Sheriff; but it certainly looked as if they might beat him.



Thad Dossett, the *Bugle's* young candidate, seemed to know all the tricks of campaigning and speech-making. He could quote poetry that was not very often germane to the matter in hand, but tellingly dealt with beautiful womanhood or sacred motherhood; he could adroitly and touchingly allude to the horny-handed farmer in such tones and terms that that somewhat stolid personage seemed to rise right up and perch atop an unblemished pedestal; and, at just the right moment, he could turn a joke as deftly as you please.

Private Tobe continued going down to the Big Bend every few days to try his luck with old Yellowbelly; and it was coming to seem that young Mr. Thaddeus Dossett was going to get so many votes that Private Tobe, after election day, would have time aplenty for the outwitting of the ancient fish.

And then one bright November morning, Private Tobe startled his old deputy Frank Toulmin—and to startle Frank Toulmin is not an easy thing to do. The Sheriff stood before a window of his office, thoughtfully observing the Confederate monument on the courthouse lawn below.

"Son," he said, "I'm goin' to make a speech."

A moment, Frank observed him over his spectacles. "You?"—just a little incredulously, for if Private Tobe had ever made a speech Frank didn't know of it.

"Yep, me."

"Just where—and when—are you goin' to make that speech?"

"Out at Shiloh Chapel, this incomin' Sat'day."

Toulmin bent over his ledger again. "That's *one* speech I'm goin' to listen to." And then, under his breath, he added something that sounded considerably like, "The Lawd he'p you!"

Private Tobe delivered his speech; but before he got upon his feet for that purpose, young Mr. Dossett delivered his, and as Private Tobe himself would tell you, Mr. Dossett did himself proud. His speech had just the right amount of poetry and just the right number of jokes; and finally, when he took up the Broome case, men in the audience jerked their heads and women sucked in their lips in agreement and approval. Then, head flung back, voice vibrant and finger accusingly pointing in the general direction of the derelict Private Tobe, he hurled out:

"—No more heinous crime in the history of our great commonwealth; aye, no more heinous in civilized history! A poor man, who earns his bread by the sweat of his brow, cast his lot among you. And what is his reward? I

With Sam nodding in evidence of his understanding, a low-toned conversation ensued.



ask you! The wife of his bosom—she who through the years has shared his good fortune and his adversity—is torn from him by the bloody and sinister hand of a murderer! And what effort, my friends, has your Sheriff made to apprehend this fiend who still is at large and who may at this moment be planning to snatch your loved ones from you or my loved ones from me? In all kindness I ask, what effort has your Sheriff made to apprehend this modern *Bluebeard*? I'll tell you!" He bent over till his hands rested upon his knees; he spoke hissing and confidentially. "I'll tell you what effort he has made: He has gone fishing—fishing, my good friends!

"Yet one week would suffice to put the perpetrator of that dastardly crime behind the bars. I go on record now as saying that, as your Sheriff, I'll have the fiend under lock and key within one week after taking office."

Then, Private Tobe's turn came; I must admit he looked just a little slipshod and shabby, what with his old alpaca coat and his bagging trousers and his loosely laced shoes and I must admit there was no ring to his voice and no poetry crossed his lips and he seemed more than a little ill at ease. "Folks, my young friend here sure did make a fine speech—a soul-stirrin' speech, you might say. Yes, sir, that was a speech to remember. A heap o' what he said was true as the Book—meanin' no sacrilege. One thing special I remember, and I want all o' you folks to remember—my young friend here says give him just one week and he'll have the varmint what killed that poor woman. Now then, bein' a loyal citizen o' this county, I feel like I owe it to you all and to myself to catch that murderer just as quick as possible; and as my young friend Thad can catch him in a week, I aint goin' to make him wait till after Election Day to do it. I'm goin' to deputize him here and now and start him out. Here's the paper all ready. So, Thad, you go get him—and just take your time.

"And, son, I want to tell you here and now, before all these folks, I aint goin' to take any advantage of you whilst you's busy roundin' that fellow up. I aint goin' to make no speeches and I won't ask nobody for their vote while you's devotin' your valuable time to the interests o' this county. In fact, I aim to do a right smart o' fishin'. I'm sort o' behind with it." And Private Tobe sat down.

On his way back to town, he slowed his flivver sufficiently to be heard, and glanced toward his old deputy. "Well, son, what'd you think o' my maiden speech?"

Frank paused long enough to cross his legs. "That wasn't no speech—that was just a damn' fool confession."

TWO days later, Deputy Toulmin glanced up from his tax record. "Sheriff, you reckon that fellow's got any chance o' findin' whoever 'twas killed Broome's wife?"

Private Tobe stretched his legs, whimsically eying his unlaced shoes. "Son, he aint got no more chance than you have o' treinin' a gopher up a longleaf pine."

Private Tobe was not thinking of fishing, but of a woman, pitifully abject, who would run the risk of manhandling for the sake of a mere pet crow.



"How come you so sure?"

"Well, there's two reasons. First off, 'tween me 'n' you, he aint smart enough. Second, if it 'pears like he's on the trail, I'm goin' to arrest the fellow myself."

Toulmin put down his pen. "You're goin' to arrest him?"

"Yep, goin' to arrest him."

The deputy came from behind his desk and looked down at Private Tobe. "You know who killed that woman?"

Private Tobe seemed surprised, perhaps even just a little chagrined. "Know? Course I know. Been knowin' for the longest."

Toulmin wiped his mouth with the palm of his hand. "Then why in tarnation aint you locked him up?"

"Well, son, there's some mighty good reasons. You'll understand such things better when you get to be as old as me. For one thing, whilst I knows who did it—and how he did it—I aint just got the low-down on him, as you might say, and juries are mighty set about havin' sure 'nough proof. Then"—he bent over to lace his shoes—"it's a heap better to catch a skunk in a trap than it is just to run him in a hole. It saves a heap o' work and diggin', not to mention a cert'n unpleasantness." He paused in the doorway. "If anybody comes askin' for me, just tell 'em I'm out."

"Where you goin'? I might need you myself."

Private Tobe weighed that. "Well, 'tween me 'n' you, I'm headed out Sheeplow way. I got a little crow-trappin' to see to."

"Crow-trappin'?"

Private Tobe smiled. "Son, you must be gettin' sort o' hard o' hearin' here lately. I'm goin' crow-trappin'. It sure is great sport."

Deputy Toulmin turned back to his work. "What you *better* do's to go vote-trappin'!" he muttered in an undertone.

Things looked so bad for Private Tobe politically that his stanchest friends avoided the subject of his candidacy and old Frank Toulmin was wondering what job he could get after Thad Dossett was made Sheriff. In fact, one November

afternoon, Deputy Toulmin flung down his pen and said things to Private Tobe that only a mighty close and a mighty old friend would say.

"You're just throwin' away your last chance by fishin' for that old yellow-bellied catfish when you ought to be ridin' these hills and hollows shakin' hands with the voters and praisin' the women's cookin' and kissin' the babies. This Dossett's just naturally goin' to eat you up."

Private Tobe smiled contentedly. "Son, you just take things too serious. Somethin' I got to see to."

"Fishin', I reckon!" Deputy Toulmin sounded like the *Bugle*.

Well, I'll be steppin' along. "Fishin', I reckon!" Deputy Toulmin sounded like the *Bugle*.

Private Tobe paused just inside the doorway. "Nope. I hate to miss it, but I can't go fishin' today. Old Yellow-belly's safe for the present. I'm buildin' me a skiff."

An expression of hopelessness stole into Deputy Toulmin's eyes. "Buildin' a skiff—now?"

"Yep, right now. As the *Bugle* says, *procrastinatin'* is a terrible vice, so I'm gettin' right at it. I've had pirogues, batteaus, keel-bottoms, and just about every kind o' boat, but I aint never had one what just suited me. Now I'm goin' to have it."

Evidently it took him nearly a week to build his boat, for during that week he spent mighty little time in the Sheriff's office and went fishing but twice down at the Big Bend. During that week, affairs in Minniesburg and Cooper County went on about as they had for several weeks past. As Private Tobe himself stated, "Things sure is mighty usual."

And then Private Tobe departed from the usual with a suddenness that was all but startling. For five days running and at just about five o'clock in the afternoon, he drove down the river road, turned in at a narrow lane leading to the Big Bend, halted his flivver when it began "buck-jumpin'," as he expressed it, in the deep sand and, fishing-pole over his shoulder and bag of bait in his hand, made his way toward that somewhat shabby shanty-boat bearing the name *Moonbeam*.

Halting beside the boat, he smiled up at silent Slade Broome. "Friend, howdy! If you aint got no objections, I aim to do a little fishin' at the end o' your boat here. You see, there's a old yellow-belly livin' in these waters I been tryin' to catch, right at ten years. As you most likely know, I've fished for him all times durin' the day, 'scusin' just 'fore night. And now I figure on doin' that. That is, o' course, if you aint got any objections."

Apparently, Slade Broome had none; so, softly whistling "Molly Put de Kettle On," Private Tobe baited his

hook, dangled his legs over the side of the boat and dropped his hook into the water. He stayed there till nearly seven o'clock—it was good dark by then—when, bidding his silent host good night, he made his way to his flivver and back into Minniesburg.

The second afternoon—or evenin', as Private Tobe would say—Broome returned his "Howdy!" The third afternoon he went so far as to hand his guest a small bit of liver, with a muttered, "Try this." The fourth and fifth afternoons, after Private Tobe had fished a matter of thirty minutes, Broome leaned over and resting his arms upon the *Moonbeam's* rail, watched the old man fish till the opposite bank of the river was hidden by the lowering twilight, and the water below was but vaguely seen—till, in fact, Private Tobe somewhat laboriously straightened out his stiffened limbs and started toward his flivver. And on these fourth and fifth afternoons, he even dropped a word now and then as to fishing in other waters. It is difficult to be with Private Tobe Elliott five afternoons running and not, to some degree, fall under his spell.

On that fifth evening, Private Tobe drove his flivver into his rear yard and, for reasons of his own, backed it up to a shed that serves as workshop, storage-house and general plunder rooms. Then, eating his supper, he sat before his open fire—first unlacing his shoes, of course.

Came eight o'clock, which is Private Tobe's hour for retiring, and still he sat before his fire. Nine o'clock came, then ten and eleven, and he was still there. Just before eleven-thirty he bent over a little wheezingly, and laced his shoes.

Then he got upon his feet and drew his hat securely upon his head. Somewhat stealthily he made his way to his back door, opened it and, stepping out into the night, closed it noiselessly behind him. Midway across the yard he paused, listening. Apparently sure none saw or heard, he proceeded to his flivver and with considerable blowing and a little mild profanity, let down its top.

Then Private Tobe set to work in earnest. It was a real job for him, for as he'll tell you—when not campaigning for reelection—he's not as young as he once was. At last he was done. A small skiff was across the tonneau of his car. It was an odd sort of skiff, strange to that region of the river. The ends were square, yet narrow; the bottom was flat, save for a narrow strip serving as a keel; the beam seemed strangely great for a craft so short. Anyway, it was Private Tobe's skiff. He had built it himself and had himself loaded it upon his flivver; and now, with it roped upon that flivver, he drove from his yard and out upon the silent street.

Until he reached the outskirts of the town, it was a trying job for him, what with endeavoring to determine, by peering to the right and to the left, whether any observed him, and to coast whenever possible in order to lessen the noise of his car. So far as he could tell, the streets were deserted. Even while driving through Baptist Bottoms, a negro section of the town, he saw neither man, woman nor child.

Wheeling into the river road, he followed that sandy thoroughfare just about a half-mile; then he left it to grope his way along a narrow, deeply rutted lane leading in the

general direction of the river. Finally he halted and shut off his motor. Before him, vaguely outlined in the night, was a low picket fence and beyond this the slightly sharper outlines of a squat log cabin. No window was visible, but streaks of light stole through cracks in what doubtless was a door. Beyond the house and below the house, sounded a faint *lap-lapping* from the river.

Private Tobe called sibilantly: "Sam!"

The door opened and a man stepped out into the night—a black man, strangely small of stature and exceedingly wrinkled of countenance. "Yas, suh!"

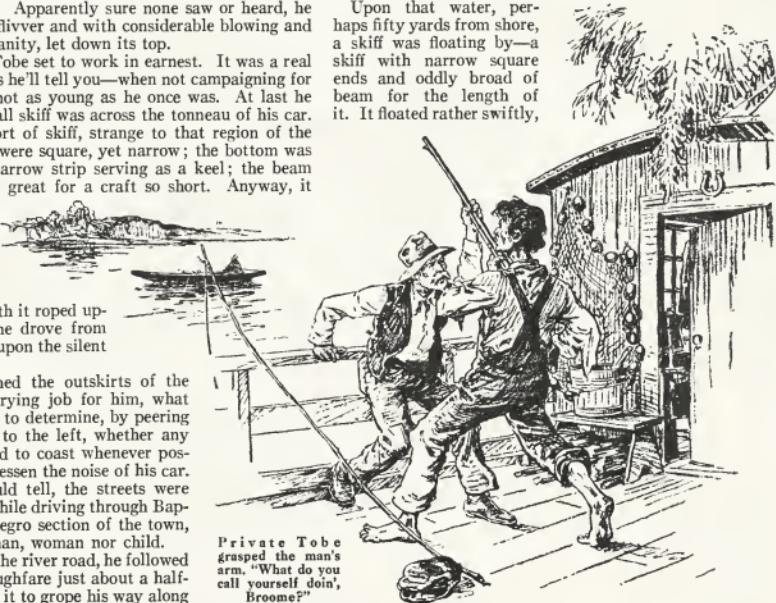
With Private Tobe leaning over the door of his car, and ebon Sam nodding in evidence of understanding, certain low-toned conversation ensued; then Private Tobe got from his car and, with the aid of the other, unloaded the skiff, carried it to the water's edge and effectively concealed it under a low-limbed willow tree.

The following afternoon—it was a Tuesday—shortly before five o'clock and to the disgust of Deputy Toumlin, Private Tobe drove down to the Big Bend, as cheerily as you please climbed aboard the shanty-boat *Moonbeam*, baited his hook with a morsel he hoped would tempt old Yellowbelly and dropped his hook into the water. Slade Broome crossed his long legs and leaned upon the boat's rail, prepared to watch the old man fish.

By five-thirty, the far-distant bank across the river had become but a vague, irregular line. At six, the middle of the river would have been hidden but for the mellow afterglow in the sky. Twilight had settled upon the stream and upon the land, and upon the shanty-boat *Moonbeam*.

And then Private Tobe heard the man beside him suck in his breath; out of the corner of his eye, he saw the man straighten and, gripping the rail with his two hands lean forward as though the better to see an object upon the water.

Upon that water, perhaps fifty yards from shore, a skiff was floating by—a skiff with narrow square ends and oddly broad of beam for the length of it. It floated rather swiftly,



for the river at that point has thrown off its lassitude and is swirling and floundering around the Big Bend. No one was to be seen in the skiff, but upon the seat near the stern was a small, squarish creation that might have been some manner of hamper, or perhaps a bird-cage made of small sticks or wands; within the hamper or cage an object, blacker than the sky, moved jerkily about.

The skiff, flung along by the scurrying river, neared the center of the Big Bend's arc; and, as it disappeared around the curving shore there came from it with startling suddenness a strange sound—a sound that was petulant and rauous—a sound that, in the lowering twilight, was almost eerie. It might have been the outcry of a fretful child. Or the voice of a crow being at the moment annoyed.

Private Tobe heard the low door of the *Moonbeam's* cabin close; glancing up, he found he was alone.

HAD one been standing that mid-November evening upon the river's bank a quarter of a mile below the Big Bend, and endowed with night vision, one might have seen a skiff come floating along; one might of a sudden have seen a very small and a very black negro man raise himself from the bottom of the skiff and after cautiously peering over its side, grasp a short paddle and steer the skiff into a hidden indentation or cove in the river's bank. And, had one been sufficiently curious and patient, one might have waited and later seen a ramshackle car halt at a spot near this hidden cove, and a slightly aging man, known to his friends as Private Tobe Elliott, load that skiff across the tonneau of his car. After motioning the small negro to the front seat of the car and placing upon that somewhat wizened personage's lap what appeared to be a home-made willow cage holding a crow, he rapidly drove away.

This, you will remember, happened upon a Tuesday. On Wednesday afternoon and promptly at five o'clock, Private Tobe Elliott climbed to the *Moonbeam's* deck, baited his hook and dangled his legs over the boat's side.

Again Broome stood over him; but it struck Private Tobe the man had lost some of his interest in the effort to outwit old Yellowbelly. In fact, as five-thirty came and finally six o'clock, the man seemed to have forgotten him. Broome was now standing erect, his hands upon the *Moonbeam's* rail; he was looking out across the water. Then Private Tobe saw the man's hands leave the rail and for a long moment hang clenched at his sides.

A stone's throw from the shore a skiff was drifting by—a skiff that seemed empty save for a cagelike contrivance in the stern of it.

Without taking his eyes from the boat and in a tone that was strange to Private Tobe, Broome huskily demanded: "What boat's that?"

"Boat?" Private Tobe glanced up, an expression of mild surprise upon his seamed face. "Whereabouts?"

"Can't you see it? Right—" But the man did not finish. Instead, he wheeled about, hurried into the *Moonbeam's* cabin and closed the door behind him.

The third afternoon, the shanty-boat seemed deserted as Private Tobe seated himself upon her deck. When his hook was in the water, he glanced over his shoulder and called: "Hello!—Anybody home round here?"

Behind him, the cabin's door opened. A moment Broome eyed him uncertainly; then, as a man ashamed to do otherwise, he crossed the deck and leaned upon the rail above Private Tobe. The Sheriff's lips came together and his eyes widened. The man had brought a rifle with him and leaned it against the rail at his side.

For some time, Private Tobe fished in silence. Then—"Wonder will I ever get old Yellowbelly?" he mused aloud.

The other was looking across the darkening water. "Might be he's left."

The Sheriff drew a new bait from his paper bag. "Maybe so; but he'll be back." He glanced up, smiling. "Pretty much everything—folks and other things—has a way o' comin' back, you know."

An instant, Broome looked down at him, moistening his lips. His hand slid along the rail till it touched the rifle leaning there. Then silently he turned, to peer again down at the river. Abruptly his body grew tense. Fifty or sixty yards out upon the half-darkened water, a skiff was drifting. Apparently it was empty, save for a cagelike contrivance upon the seat in the stern.

Private Tobe felt a hand gripping his arm, and he heard the man beside him breathing rapidly; and then he heard that man at his side hoarsely whisper, "Out there! What boat's that?"

The old Sheriff glanced at the water before him and then downstream and then upstream where the Big Bend begins.

"Pahndner, what boat you talkin' about?" Perhaps Broome did not hear him, for he had run to the stern of the shanty-boat and was looking down at a small skiff tied there; and he got upon his knees and, groping under the *Moonbeam's* rail, took the skiff's painter in his hands and jerked and tugged at it as though to make sure a skiff actually floated at the rope's end. He was upon his feet again, hurrying back to Private Tobe's side.

That other skiff, floating out yonder, was nearing the center of the Big Bend's arc, when there came from it—or from the small cage at its stern—a strange, raucous sound—a sound such as comes from rubbing a chip of resin upon a fiddle-string; a sound such as comes from the throat of a crow whose tongue has been slit and which, at the moment, is annoyed.

Shaking as in the grip of an ague, Broome got upon his knees. He took the rifle in his trembling hands and pressed the butt of it to his shoulder.

Private Tobe grasped the man's arm till the gun's muzzle pointed toward the darkening sky. "What do you call yourself doin', Broome?"

The man's fingers opened, leaving the gun in Private Tobe's hands. The palm of one hand reached down and pressed the shanty-boat's deck for support; with the other he wiped his trembling lips and then pointed across the water and downstream. "Out there! Out there!"

"Out there? What's wrong out there?" "That boat! It's my boat—but it ain't my boat!" The man's voice shook with fear. And then, with a desperation born of fear—"That crow!" A flood of blasphemies dribbled from his lips. "I killed the damned thing! But it's there—out there, a-comin' back—" He got upon his feet and strove to wrest the gun from Private Tobe's grip.

"What are you aimin' to do, Broome?" softly asked Private Tobe.

The other wheeled upon him. "I'll kill it again! I'll—"

"And her?" One of Private Tobe's hands rested gently upon Slade Broome's shoulder. "And her? Would you—kill her again—too, Broome?" he slowly questioned.

The man's eyes peered into Private Tobe's; his lips moved, though no word crossed them. Then he sank to the shanty-boat's deck and groped for the boat's low rail. "Oh, God!" he gasped in a voice of searing penitence.

YOUNG Mr. Thaddeus Dossett, candidate for Sheriff in opposition to Private Tobe Elliott, continued making speeches during the remainder of that memorable campaign; but his jokes seemed to lose some of their savor and his satire some of its edge and his poetry some of its charm after the Minnesburg Weekly *Bugle* published Slade Broome's confession. Evidently Mr. Dossett sensed that Private Tobe would be reelected by what the *Bugle* would call a handsome majority. . . . And he was.

Curly Goes Crooked

A favorite Blue Book writer turns his hand to a cowboy comedy.

By LEMUEL DEBRA

Illustrated by Henry Thiede

FOR the fifth time Charley Walton, better known as "Curly," of the C. P. A.,—meaning Cattlemen's Protective Association—strode thoughtfully past the crying girl. He was certain that there was something wrong, and he longed to offer his assistance; but having had almost no experience with "the sleeker sex"—as Curly always spoke of women—he feared to intrude.

Accustomed to reading signs, Curly had noticed at once that the girl had neither hat, gloves nor handbag—nothing that a girl would ordinarily have if leaving on a trip or returning from one. She sat near the window of the Calzona waiting-room, her left elbow, resting on the sill, in her hand one of those half-grown feminine handkerchiefs with which she was trying to cover her eyes.

With a sudden mustering of courage, Curly stopped in front of the young woman. He doffed his big sombrero.

"Miss—or Madam—can I—er—is there anything—"

The girl did not move, did not take the handkerchief from her eyes; but sharply she cut him off:

"Will you *please* attend to your own damned business—and leave me *alone!* I—"

With a slight start the girl checked herself. Curly noted that beneath the handkerchief she was staring at his boots; then her gaze lifted to his cartridge belt and old wooden-handled forty-five.

Suddenly she snatched the handkerchief away and looked up at the man.

"Oh!" she gasped, coloring. "I—I beg your pardon! I thought it was—" She stopped suddenly as if afraid to mention the name.

"It's all right with me, ma'am," Curly hastened to assure her, shifting his feet uneasily. "Go on an' cuss if you feel like it. I'm purty good at it myself when I get started; only it don't sound so nice when I cuss. But I didn't mean no harm. I seen you was a stranger in Calzona an' I reckoned mebbe you had lost your ticket—or your husband."

The girl's lips parted in a quick smile—and Curly's embarrassment mounted. She had made a pretty picture sitting there by the window; but that dazzling smile made her absolutely beautiful.

"I didn't have a ticket," the girl said quietly, "and I've never had a husband. Right now I wouldn't have the least use for either one."

"Yes'm," muttered Curly, his deep-tanned face reddening.

The girl regarded him curiously and with evident interest. A single glance took in the man's huge, lithe frame,



the leather vest and concha-studded chaps, and his big freckled hands; but his face and eyes held her gaze. The boyish mouth with humorous wrinkles at the corners was in sharp contrast to the stern clip of his jaw; while the blue eyes were sharp, but friendly. Intuitively the girl sensed—what many a rustler had learned by bitter experience—that beneath Curly Walton's pose of innocent simplicity was a native shrewdness worth far more to him in his work than any "book-learnin'" could ever be.

"You live here?" the girl asked presently.

"Yes'm. I belong in this country; Curly is my name, ma'am."

The girl lowered her gaze a moment, her face thoughtful. "I—I suppose that you know Dr. Jones," she said quietly.

Curly's eyes hardened. "You mean the tooth-dentist, ma'am?"

The girl looked up, smiling. "Yes, that's the one. I—Won't you sit down? I must talk with some one, and—"

Curly Walton sat down on the bench beside the girl. Neither spoke for a moment; then she turned to him impulsively.

"Mr.—er—Curly, I've been working for Dr. Jones—at his house, I mean. I got along with him all right because he was seldom home; but Mrs. Jones and I had trouble right from the start. I stayed on because—well, because I knew of no other place to go."

"Today, Mrs. Jones missed some of her silverware that her sister back East sent her last Christmas. She accused me of stealing it. She was so horrid about it that I just turned my back on her and went to my room. She followed me and threatened to have me arrested. Finally she became so abusive that when she ordered me to leave, I was so frightened I went at once."

"And here I am—just as you see me. Everything I possesses is in my room. Mrs. Jones said she was going to keep my wages—and everything I had—to pay for the stolen silverware."

Curly's grunt of disgust was eloquent.

"She's that kind, all right! An' that darned tooth-dentist husband o' hern aint any better! You got a trunk, I s'pose?"

"No. I could carry everything."

"Then le's you an' me go right to Doc Jones' house an' settle this! I'll stand 'em off while you get your things—an' the money due you, Miss—"

"Just call me Neva, please. And thank you! But I wouldn't do—what you suggest. It would get you into trouble."

"Trouble!" Curly grinned. "Me—I aint been in nothin'



"Jes' wanted to tell you, Curly, that you had everything figured out just right."

"I couldn't let you do that! I—" Suddenly the girl's face brightened. "But you *have* given me an idea! By the time we get to the house the family will be at supper. While you stand watch, I can slip up to my room—there's an outside stairway—and get my things. As for my wages, I'd rather lose them than have any more trouble. I'm afraid of Mrs. Jones. She said she'd have me arrested if I didn't get out of town before dark."

"She said that?" Curly stared at the girl incredulously. Well as he knew Mrs. Jones' temper, there was something about that last statement that didn't ring true.

"She said just that," the girl declared, rising. "Shall we go?"

Curly arose. They left the waiting-room. As they turned from the gravel platform on to the walk that led uptown, Curly stopped short. For a moment he looked back in the direction of the station, then went on. "Believe I seen that Jeff Bird spavin' on us, Miss Neva," he explained. "But don't you worry none—he can't do nothin'; an' I'm sure goin' to do a-plenty to him, as soon as I get you all fixed up."

The desert night had fallen swiftly. Avenida Sanchez, the main street of the little border town, was aglow with lights. In the Lame Horse Inn some one was playing the piano. Chinky Ben was calling supper on his old triangle.

"Miss Neva," spoke up Curly, slowing down, "I ain't afraid o' nothin' so far as I'm concerned; but the more I think of it the more I don't like the idee o' you sneakin' into that house like a—like a thief. S'posin' you got caught? Them Joneses would sure make out a case ag'in' you. Course, I could explain to the Sheriff; but it'd be a heap better to go right to him now an'—"

"No, no!" the girl interrupted. I don't want to do that. And I don't want to go on that lighted street. Let's cut through on this alley."

Again Curly glanced curiously at the girl. Something about her had a queer ring! "Jes' as you say," he agreed, and again he turned and looked back. Some one was following up the walk from the station.

The Jones house was a huge gloomy structure of two and a half stories. Pepper trees lined the street; neglected palms dotted the yard. Standing in the deep shadow of one of the pepper trees, the girl pointed out a lighted window in the middle of the house on the lower floor.

"That's the dining-room, as I suppose you know. And back there you see the outside stairs running up to that rear veranda. When I get halfway up those stairs I can see if the family are at supper. If they are, I'll go on up. My room is just at the head of the stairs. I can find my things in the dark, I believe; but if anything goes wrong I'll call you."

"An' I'll come a-runnin', Neva! But you'd better let me go with you. I ain't never robbed a house; but I'd sure like to be your accessory before an' after the fact in this here case. 'Sides, a person oncet told me I had predatory instincts. I ain't sure what that is, but it sounds awful. *S-sh!* Some one is comin'!"

Heavy steps sounded on the gravel walk. Curly drew the girl farther back into the shadows. Down the walk came a shadowy figure that gave the impression of being as wide as it was high. The figure slowed as it passed Curly and the girl, then rolled on.

"He saw us!" the girl whispered. "Do you think he recognized you?"

but trouble ever since I was knee-high to a horned toad. Where'd you put the silveryware, Neva?"

The girl gasped.

"Where'd I put it? Why, I never touched—"

"I meant afore it was stolen."

"Oh!" Miss Neva smiled again. "It was kept in a drawer in the dining-room. Why?"

"They're a *hombre* doin' odd jobs for Doc Jones, name o' Jeff Bird. Did he ever go messin' round where you kept that silveryware?"

"Not exactly that; but he knew where we kept it."

"Uh-huk." Curly unfolded his long legs and refolded them the other way. "Well, Neva, if that silveryware has been stolen, an' if Mrs. Jones didn't swipe it herself to put up some job on her husband, an' if Doc Jones didn't take it, himself, to play some dirty trick on Mrs. Jones, then that Jeff Bird is the one who got the loot."

"I don't doubt it," the girl declared. "I—I despise that man. He was always hanging around me, making insolent remarks. He even followed me down here and spoke to me several times. When you came, I thought—" The girl fell silent as the station-agent came from his office. He nodded to Curly, lighted the two wall lamps, then went back into his office and closed the door.

"Doc Jones will be home by this time," said Curly. "Miss Neva, le's go."

Miss Neva hesitated, a troubled look on her face.

"Mebbe you'd rather jes' give me a list o' your things an' a statement showin' how much money is due you," Curly suggested. "I'll give you the money to go on home, if you want; an' I'll put your case in the hands o' the Sheriff."

"Not a chance," Curly lied cheerfully. "But I changed my mind 'bout goin' in with you. Reckon I'd jes' be in the way. Go get your war-bags, Miss Neva. An' hurry!"

Without a word the girl slipped away in the darkness. Curly saw her figure dimly outlined on the stairs, saw her pause and look in the direction of the dining-room: then she vanished.

Curly waited, his ears tuned to catch the slightest sound. Seconds passed, and dragged into minutes. The girl must have a lot of baggage, or must be having trouble gathering it up in the dark, Curly decided.

A moment later Curly's keen ears caught a faint sound. Down the gravel walk, in the direction that rolling figure had gone, some one was approaching stealthily. Having recognized that rolling figure, Curly was not surprised; but what happened the next instant gave him a start.

Out of the darkness on the rear veranda came a rough voice: "Hey, who's in there?"

No answer. A match flamed up on the veranda, then vanished, to reappear in the room at the head of the stairs, the room the girl had said was hers.

"Hell an' hot biscuits!" muttered Curly. "Reckon that poor man—"

He broke off. Evidently that rolling figure had heard the man's voice, for he had started running. As he waddled up to where Curly stood, he stopped short.

"Yeah, it's me," said Curly quietly. "What's aillin' you, Joe?"

"What's you doin' here, Curly?" demanded City Marshal Joe Tobin. "You forgettin' that since you busted Doc Jones' scheme to steal a lot o' Gov'ment land he's threatened to shoot you on sight?"

"Is that a fact?" exclaimed Curly. "So that's why he never sees me no more! Gosh! An' here I am waiting to see him soon as he gets through supper. Ast me to eat with 'em, but I got such a toothache I can't set still."

Curly pressed his big left paw over the side of his face.

"Ast you to join 'em?" The Marshal stepped as close to Curly as his big stomach would permit, and peered into Curly's face. Out of the corner of his eye, Curly saw the match-flame in the girl's room die out, saw another light up instantly at the window. "Ast you to join 'em, eh?" the Marshal repeated. "That's funny! I just seen Doc Jones downtown so drunk he couldn't hit the ground with his hat."

"Eh? Well, I didn't say I seen the Doc pussonly," Curly hastily amended. "It was Mrs. Jones who ast me. I just reckoned—"

"An' I just seen Mrs. Jones in Newt Brown's Emporium buyin' some tomaters for supper."

"You did?" Curly heaved a doleful sigh. "Well, Joe, mebbe it was jes' the hired girl I seen. You orto be ashamed o' yourself—pickin' on a feller with a toothache." Again Curly pressed a hand to his face.

"Toothache? Huh! First on one side o' your face, then on the other, eh? Say, where in—"

With a gasp, the Marshal broke off. Curly Walton's long-barreled forty-five had dug into Marshal Tobin's ample paunch.

"Stick 'em up, you! A *hombre* that gets to seein' things like you been, Joe, aint safe to be runnin' loose! Up, I tell you!"

Hesitatingly, the Marshal obeyed. Curly took the Marshal's gun, searched him quickly for another weapon, but found none. He shoved his prisoner toward the pepper tree.

"Flop right down here, Joe, an' stick your homely mug in them leaves. You seen all you're goin' to see for—"

"Hell, Curly, have you gone plumb loco? You're resistin' an' interferin' an' obstructin' the law an' justice! You'll be—"

"Git down, Joe, afore I knock you down!"

Muttering, protesting, the Marshal eased his bulky form to the ground.

"On your belly!" ordered Curly. "An' stick your face—"

"I can't lay on my belly, Curly! It's too big. I allus roll off on one side."

"You won't do no rollin' when I get you fixed!" threatened Curly, planting a booted foot firmly on the small of the Marshal's back—that word "small" being used in the anatomical sense and having no reference to dimension.

"Curly, you fire-eatin' fool!" spluttered the Marshal, his face in the leaves. "You listen to me! No, I won't shut up! You been actin' so crazy I plumb forgot that I came back mostly to ast you 'bout that girl. The Sheriff got a circular today about a girl who come down here from

Phoenix. Her game is to get a job in rich folks' houses, then rob 'em. Usually works some easy fool to stand guard while she—"

The Marshal's voice died in a wheezy gasp of pain as Curly dug his boot-heel into the man's back. There was an instant of silence.

"Joe," said Curly evenly, "did that there circular have a picture o' the girl?"

"It did—an' she's sure a beauty! Purty eyes, purty hair, sweet—"

"That's enough!"

"That the girl I seen with y o u, Curly?" asked the Marshal.

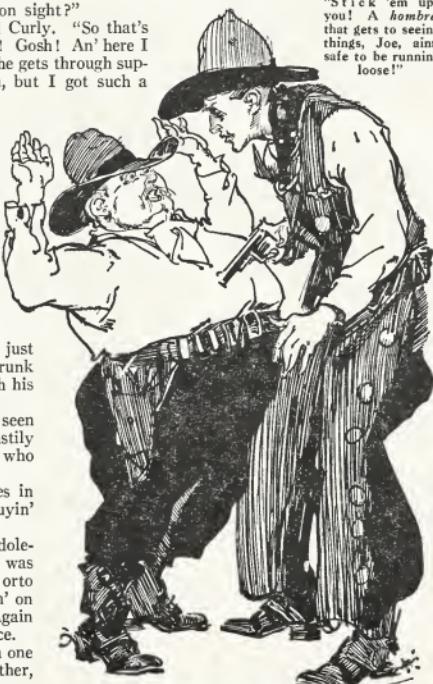
"Shut up!" snapped Curly. "I'm a-thinkin'! Joe, that—that aint no occupancy for a woman."

"It sh o u r e aint; but they're runned clever atit!"

"That girl needs a friend—a *pardner*! No; shut up an' lemme talk! Joe, for a girl like her I'd—I'd go crooked myself. When she looks at me with them purty eyes o' hern, gosh!—I could go out an' steal a hoss from my best friend!"

"You're crazy!" spluttered the Marshal.

"Crazy as hell an' proud of it," agreed Curly. "S-sh, Joe, some one's a-comin'!"



Comin' from the back part of the house. . . . Joe, be careful—I'm goin' to let you roll!"

As Curly stepped out to the walk, the figure fast approaching called out: "That you, Curly?"

"No, it's my Aunt Mary," drawled Curly. "I aint here, Bird."

"I seen you with that girl at the dee-po," Bird growled, walking up to Curly. "Thought you was up to something, an' I follered. Got a lot to tell you 'bout her, so come along. I'm goin' after the Marshal—"

"An' you've gone far enough!" Curly cut in, shoving his six-gun against Bird's stomach. "Shut up—an' put up!"

With a startled grunt, Bird shoved up his hands. Curly searched quickly for a gun, but found none. Leading Bird beneath the pepper tree, he ordered the Marshal to rise.

"I'm goin' to borrer them bracelets I found hangin' on your belt," he told the Marshal, taking the handcuffs. "This *hombre*," he went on, deftly snapping one cuff over Bird's right wrist, "wants a private talk with you: so—"

Before either man could move to resist him, Curly shoved Bird's arm up and slipped the handcuff chain over a limb, caught the Marshal's right arm and snapped the cuff over his fat wrist.

Then, ignoring their struggles and vitriolic oaths, Curly appropriated the Marshal's key and started for the house.

A voice down the walk brought him up short. It was a thick voice, muttering surly.

"The Doc!" exclaimed Curly. "Doggone it, the company's gettin' wuss! You fellers keep quiet now! Not a cheep out o' you until the Doc gets into the house!"

Out of the silence, there came from the rear of the house the sound of a window being cautiously raised. Then—

"Hoo-hoo! Oh, Curly! I'm locked in!"

"Comin'!" sang out Curly recklessly. He turned to Bird. "That's your work! Fork over that key *pronto* or I'll—"

"It's in the door," Bird answered loudly. "I thought mebbe the Doc or Mrs. Jones would get back before I found the Marshal an'—"

Curly did not hear the rest. He was dashing across the lawn and across the veranda to the door. Groping in the dark, he found the key, turned it, and flung the door open.

"I got a few of my things," the girl whispered as Curly stumbled in headlong. "I was too scared to get any more. Was that Bird who locked me in? I was hiding in the closet and didn't dare look."

"Yes, ma'am, it was Bird," Curly replied, seizing hold of two suitcases. "Better hurry, Miss Neva!"

"I'm ready! Who's out there? I hear voices!"

Above the creaking of the veranda as they hurried to the head of the stairs, Curly heard the shouting:

"Hey, Doc!" cried the Marshal. "Go get a saw!"

"Get an ax!" bellowed Bird. "Get an ax!"

"You fellers leave my—hic—tree alone!" was the Doc's answer. "C'mon out here an' have a—hic—li'l drink!"

"Don't mind 'em, Miss Neva," whispered Curly. "Jes' a bunch o' Modern Woodmen comin' home from lodge; Foller me—an' watch that I don't lose none o' this loot."

With more haste than caution, Curly tumbled down the steps with his two heavy suitcases. He was near the last step when, as bad luck would have it, his boot-heel caught—and over he went, headfirst, the suitcases flying.

Neva uttered a gasp of dismay. The men beneath the trees were shouting. A huge shadow, muttering astounded curses, was stumbling hurriedly toward where Curly lay.

"Go on!" ordered Curly, springing up. "Down the walk to your right! Hurry!"

He grabbed up one of the suitcases. As he reached for the other, he discovered that it had burst open. Hastily, Curly crammed back in the stuff that had fallen out. The



Curly was near the last step when his boot-heel caught and over he went, headfirst, the suitcases flying.

last thing he found on the ground was a flannel roll. As he picked that up, something in the heavy roll caught the light from the dining-room windows—and flashed a silvery white!

"What the—hic—hell's goin' on here?" roared the Doc.

"Jes' movin' out, Doc," Curly answered calmly. He snapped the suitcase shut and slipped the silverware in his pocket. With a quick side-jump, he evaded the Doc's grasp. "So long!" Curly called out as the Doc sprawled his length on the lawn.

The girl had not gone far. Curly quickly caught up with her and with a low-spoken word led her off the walk into a weed-grown yard. Circling a vacant house they came out in the alley at the rear, crossed it and entered another yard. Just ahead was a lighted building.

"Where are we going?" panted the girl.

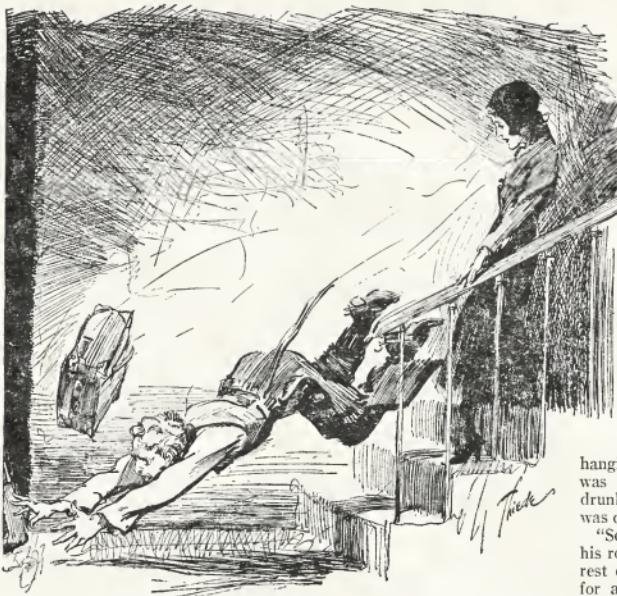
"Right here, Miss Neva. Ma Munson is a old friend o' mine, and you'll be safe here." Opening a rear door, he motioned the girl inside and closed the door quickly. They passed through this room and into the kitchen. Ma Munson, fat, fifty, turned from the stove to stare at them. "Listen, Ma," Curly began quietly; "this is a friend o' mine who jes' came in. She wants a room, but she's dead tired an' don't want to see no one. Savvy?"

"Huh!" scoffed Ma Munson, a humorous twinkle in her eye. "I allus knew that half the lies you tell aint true, Curly; but whatever you say goes. Come on, dear!"

They went up Mrs. Munson's private rear stairs to the second floor. There the landlady opened a door and lit the lamp. Curly set the suitcases inside.

"I got a little business to 'tend to, Miss Neva," Curly said. "Then you an' me'll talk while we're eatin' supper. Ma, you better set us up in one o' them family booths."

Giving the girl no chance to object, Curly hastened back downstairs. In the lobby he found Sheriff Wilkins.



"Lo, Jim," said Curly, dropping into the chair beside the Sheriff. "Got a little favor to ast you. You know that *hombre*, Jeff Bird, that works for Doc Jones, don't you?"

"I sure do, Curly. Why?"

Curly got out the Marshal's handcuff key. Briefly, he told what had happened. Wilkins chuckled when he heard how Curly had handled the Marshal and Bird. He took the handcuff key, asked a few questions, and left.

Ten minutes later Curly had washed, brushed his clothes, and was on his way to the dining-room. In the hall he met Ma Munson. She gave him a shrewd look, and ducked her head in the direction of one of the curtained booths.

"Prisoner, eh?" she whispered. "Heard the Sheriff was lookin' for a girl crook. But, land sakes, Curly, that little darlin' don't look like—"

"She's plumb dangerous, Ma," Curly interrupted quietly. "An' me, I'm *parsnips* *crimiceps* with her in her latest crime. Gosh, I'm hungry!" He hastened on, leaving Ma Munson staring.

Miss Neva gave Curly a sharp look as he entered the booth, and sat down opposite her. She appeared extremely nervous.

"You're safe here as long as you have to—to lay low," Curly said. "You're from Phoenix, aint you?"

"Y-e-s," the girl answered hesitantly; "but how'd you know?"

"Never mind. You know you fooled me tonight. Said that when you got halfway up them stairs you could see if the family was in the dining-room. When you went on up I thought—"

"I didn't see them, but I was so anxious to get my things and get away that I took a chance. Do—do you think those men will try to find us?"

"They won't find us here," Curly said when Ma Munson had left. "Jes' forget all about it now—an' eat."

The girl hesitated, then followed Curly's example. For awhile neither spoke.

"You know, Miss Neva," he said finally, "I had a feelin' all along that there was something queer about this. Say, how 'bout takin' me on as a pardner? You see, now that we turned this one trick, I—"

"Trick?" She looked startled.

From his pocket, Curly took the flannel roll and spread it out on the table. The girl took one look at the shining silver—and gasped. Before she could speak, the curtains were parted. Into the booth stepped Sheriff Wilkins.

"Lo, Jim," said Curly calmly. "Glad to see you! Meet my friend, Miss Neva. An' set down."

"Can't stay, Curly—thanks. Jes' wanted to tell you you had everything figgered out just right. The Marshal an' Bird was still

hangin' to that tree when I got there; they was so durned mad, an' Doc so durned drunk, that afore they knowned what he was doin' he had sawed off the wrong limb!

"So I took charge o' Bird. We searched his room as you ast me to, an' we found the rest of the silveryware. He tried to bluff for a while, but finally he admitted that he'd swiped it all, then planted that one roll in one o' this young lady's suitcases an' dropped a hint to Mrs. Jones—his idee bein' to get Miss Neva fired so Bird could land his wife the job. Say, how'd you get a line on Bird?"

"I was jes' goin' to tell Miss Neva 'bout that when you hopped in," answered Curly, his eyes twinkling. "Some time I'll tell you all about it, Jim; but right now I'll jes' say that the Marshal told me about that circular you got an' right off I informed him that I reckoned I'd go crooked. I was real proud o' my first trick; but when that war-bag bust open an' the loot popped out, I knewed it was all a mistake. You know yourself, Jim, that when a woman steals silveryware she allus hides it way down at the bottom under all her—er—doodads an' thingamajigs. So when this roll—which you can take with you now—popped right out o' the top I knewed it had been planted there. Did you get Miss Neva's wages?"

"I sure did," the Sheriff replied, grinning. "An' mebbe I didn't tell Doc something! Here y're, young lady!"

Chuckling, and with a bow to the girl, Sheriff Wilkins backed out of the booth. There was a tense silence.

"Miss Neva," said Curly, "I'm sorry; but since you aint no-no thief, I reckon we can't be pardners. However, mebbe I could land you a place at the Flyin' Box—if you'd like to work on a ranch."

Impulsively the girl reached across the table and her fingers closed over the upper half of Curly's big paw. Curly blushed furiously and just saved himself from trying to stir his coffee with a chicken-leg.

"Please do," said Miss Neva. "I'd love to work on a ranch—where I could meet friends—like you. Maybe—"

Again the curtains were parted.

"'Scuse me, folks!" said the Sheriff; "but, Curly, I forgot to tell you that when I got back to my office with Bird I had a phone-call from Phoenix. They've found the girl they was lookin' for."

Curly grinned. "Aint got nuthin' on me, Jim. So've I!"

The Mills of God

IX—The Mystery of the Old Moat Farm

A fact detective story

By **GEORGE BARTON**

Illustrated by Page Trotter

THREE was something fascinatingly mysterious about the old Moat Farm, located six miles from the town of Clavering in Essex, England. It always had a sinister reputation; there was a tradition in the neighborhood that it was haunted. But that was merely a local superstition which the simple folk of the countryside hugged to their breasts as a prized possession.

Yet in the days of which we write even normal persons could not pass the place without experiencing that creepy feeling which causes "goose-flesh" to rise and give us the unexplainable sensation which comes with fear. There was a rumor that one of the earliest owners of the farm, filled with remorse for a foul deed done in the days of his youth, had hanged himself from the rafters of the garret. That was really the peg on which the neighbors hung the yarn of the ghost which walked the hallways in the dead hours of the night.

As a consequence of the weird stories which were told about the place it was often unoccupied for years at a time. Few persons have the courage to brave the dark, the hidden, the incomprehensible and the inscrutable. Fear is a paralyzing emotion. The fact that it is so often causeless has nothing to do with the case; once such a sensation grips a mortal it is hard to shake off, and there is no doubt whatever that many of those who lived in the neighborhood of the Moat Farm were filled with dismay at the thought of unknown evil.

One thing that helped to spread this apprehension was the absence of light. Coming to the property at night one was likely to be impressed by the tall trees that bordered the walk leading to the main entrance of the home. They had the appearance of ghostly sentinels guarding the way to a house of mystery. It is not surprising that a newcomer should be filled with terrifying anticipation of what was to come.

While gossip concerning this house with the unenviable reputation was at its height the news flew around the neighborhood that a new tenant was coming to brave its horrors. The property was leased by a couple giving the name of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel H. Dougal. He was a tall, bronzed, soldierly man; she was frail, pretty and cultured. It seemed like a strange place for such a couple, but the newcomers paid no attention to the talk and in a short time settled down to what appeared to be a humdrum existence. They had brought one servant with them, and acted as though they had seen better days. Dougal pottered around the place but made no attempt to farm it on a large scale. The woman cultivated a little garden, but for most of the time remained within the seclusion of the house. The postman regularly brought a considerable quantity of mail to the Moat Farm and this included books and magazines. Evidently the tenants, even though far from civilization, proposed to improve their minds.

At intervals Mr. Dougal took his wife for a drive around that section of England, but he never presented her to any of the neighbors, an omission which the aforesaid neighbors resented. They took it as a

sign of "uprightness" which was not liked in that part of Essex. Occasionally he went to the village and indulged in a mug of ale, and at such times he was amiable enough. On one of these visits he engaged in conversation with an old resident who spoke to him concerning the dread which some of the people had for the old house. This good soul went so far as to report the rumor of the man who was reputed to have killed himself and of how his ghost walked in the night. The soldierly-looking Dougal laughed heartily at this talk.

"It's the worst sort of rubbish, my dear man," he cried, "and I'm surprised that such an intelligent person as yourself would even give it a moment's thought. Ghosts are inventions used to scare little children! We hear a lot about them, but in all my life I have never seen one and I never met a person that had. The ghost walks in 'Hamlet,' but nowhere else."

The vigor with which he uttered these sentiments impressed his hearer and we may be sure that the good villager passed the story of his talk around the neighbors. That night it was the subject of discussion at more than one supper-table. The effect of it was to weaken the rumors concerning the haunted house. And yet there was just a trace of misgiving about the honesty of Samuel H. Dougal. Who was he, anyhow, to come there and try to upset the traditions which had caused pleasurable shudders in generations of good folk?

But the "beautiful lady," as she was called, made a favorable impression upon the people of the neighborhood. She was so frail and so wistful that they could not help liking her, even though they only saw her at a distance. One morning Mr. and Mrs. Dougal went out for a drive together.

The woman never returned!

She disappeared as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed her. Days passed; then the gossips got to work in earnest. What was nobody's business became everybody's business. Some of the bolder ones ventured to question Mr. Dougal. He frankly and smilingly replied that Mrs. Dougal had gone to London for a short holiday.

A short time later the only servant on the premises took leave abruptly. Dougal continued to live on the place and to work the farm. He was seen digging in the garden which his wife had planted with such care. In the meantime the postman continued to deliver letters at Moat Farm addressed to a Miss Holland.

An unofficial investigation brought forth several interesting facts. The first of these was that "Mrs. Dougal"

was in reality Miss Camille Holland. While the two had lived together as man and wife there was no record to show that they had been united in the bonds of matrimony. Probably this omission was due to the fact that Dougal had a wife living somewhere in Kent. It was also discovered that Moat Farm had been purchased in the name of Miss Holland.

But what had become of Miss Holland?

That was a query which the police were not able to answer. About this time a rumor arose that she was being kept a prisoner in the house against her will. The report spread like wildfire and in a short time the people of the village were up in arms. If the story had been printed in the newspapers it could not have been given a wider circulation; without one iota of proof, men and women were profoundly convinced that the tale was true.

What could be done about it? Some of the hot-heads were in favor of taking the law into their own hands and storming the house to rescue the captive princess. Finally the matter reached such a stage that Superintendent Pryke of the local police felt he would have to do something about it.

Now in England a man's house is his castle and it may not be entered without due process of the law. So Pryke had to act with discretion, not to say diplomacy. He determined to make a social call on the "Squire," as some of the countryfolk had nicknamed Dougal. He was received with the courtesy that was to be expected from such a man. It was an uninvited visit, to be sure, but nothing would do Dougal but that the Superintendent should have a glass of ale and a smoke. It was while they were puffing away at their cigars that Pryke frankly told his host of the stories that were going around the countryside.

"That is utter nonsense," Dougal laughed. "I dislike to talk of domestic difficulties, but we have had a quarrel and the lady has left me. She asked me to take her to the train and she went to London. I have been hoping that it would blow over and that she would return home, but so far I have had no word from her."

Superintendent Pryke listened to this quietly and seemed to be convinced of its truth. But as he made no move

to go, Dougal invited the policeman to make an inspection of the house. They went from cellar to garret and looked into every place in which a person might have been kept a prisoner. They even went into the lady's boudoir and Dougal called attention to the fact that everything there was just as Miss Holland had left it when she abruptly quitted the house. It was the apartment of a woman of refinement and wealth. The style in which it was furnished and the little odds and ends indicated that it belonged to a person of taste. The officer did some thinking on his own account. He guessed that the woman had become infatuated with Dougal and, having money, had decided to defy conventionalities and live with him in an out-of-the-way spot where she could not be found by friends or relatives.

When Superintendent Pryke left the house of mystery that day it was with the conviction that the complaints against Dougal had been founded on petty gossip.

In spite of that the belief that Miss Holland had met with foul play persisted and it was so insistent that something further had to be done. So the Chief Constable of Essex, with Detective-Inspector Marden of his staff, called at Scotland Yard and poured their tale into the ears of the head of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation. As a result of that visit Chief Inspector David Scott took charge of the case. He was one of the greatest detectives of his day and generation, but here he had an enigma to solve that was worthy of his best efforts. It was now four years since Miss Holland had disappeared. Whatever traces there might have been in the beginning were cold and that made Scott's job all the more difficult.

Was Camille Holland living or dead? Was she a prisoner or was she free? These were the two important questions to be answered. And the third, which was probably the most important of all, concerned the whereabouts of Samuel Dougal, who had departed from Moat

Farm shortly after the visit of Superintendent Pryke. The de-



One morning one of the workers found a woman's shoe on the end of his fork.

tective concluded that his inquiries would have to be pursued in London and in the town of Clavering. He decided to begin in London.

It was evident that Miss Holland was a woman of means. That meant she would have had a bank account. The facilities of Scotland Yard for obtaining all sorts of information are unsurpassed, so it is not surprising that the police soon located the bank at which Miss Holland kept her account. They were interested in discovering that it was a "live account." From time to time checks were presented with her signature and regularly paid. Such checks had come from Clavering, but now they were handed in from all parts of the kingdom.

One of the questions which arose at the beginning of the inquiry related to the authenticity of the signature. The officers of the bank were questioned. They said that a year before a check had come in with her name written in a slightly different manner from her usual signature. She was presumed to be traveling, but when this incident was brought to her attention she sent the bank a letter saying that she had hurt her wrist and that this caused the difference in her penmanship. All of her canceled checks but one had been returned to Moat Farm.

This one check which had been retained by the bank was an important factor in putting the police on the right track.

The job was now to find some one familiar with the handwriting of Miss Holland. After a long search a nephew was located in one of the London suburbs. He was shown the signature on the check that had been retained by the bank. He examined it with care and then turned to the Scotland Yard man.

"Well, what about it?" he asked. "What do you want with me?"

"I want to know if that is the signature of Miss Holland."

"No, it is not my aunt's signature—it is a palpable forgery."

The natural assumption was that Dougal was the forger. Nothing had been known of him since he fled from Moat Farm and the police were at a loss to know where to begin their search. Presently it was discovered that he had an account of his own at the Birbeck bank, where his balance had been quite large. Recently he had withdrawn most of his money in Bank of England notes, but there was still a small amount to his credit and it was reasonable to suppose that he would return to the bank sometime in the future.

At this stage of the game the authorities were really faced with a double disappearance—first the woman, and then the man who was suspected of murdering her. But a man cannot be arrested for murder merely on suspicion; English law demands more than that.

So Detective-Inspector David Scott planted himself in the Birbeck bank and awaited developments. The cashier and tellers were informed that Scotland Yard wanted Samuel H. Dougal and they were told that if he came into the bank they were to inform the detective by dropping a heavy book on the floor. That would not arouse the suspicions of the man. It was said that he was in

the habit of coming into the bank on a certain day of the week—so on that day Scott redoubled his vigilance. He sat on a chair near the entrance of the bank, seemingly reading a newspaper, but in reality watching the office of the cashier and the two tellers behind the iron grill and straining his ears to hear the fall of a heavy book.

Shortly before closing time a tall, well-dressed man hurried into the bank, walked briskly up to the paying teller and asked him to change a ten-pound note. The teller smilingly said that he would be glad to do so. As he moved away from his post his arm struck a heavy ledger that stood near the edge of the counter and it fell to the floor with a resounding flop. Detective-Inspector Scott jumped from his chair and hurried toward the window.

He was perfectly satisfied that the soldierly Dougal was a master crook and now this bright person had deliberately walked into the trap that had been set for him. By this time the customer had received his money and was counting it and placing it in his pocket. Scott tapped him lightly on the arm.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "but if I am not mistaken I am speaking to Major Dougal."

The newcomer gave a start and moved back a few paces, unmistakably agitated. He replied roughly:

"No, you are wrong—that is not my name."

"But," persisted the detective, "you are the image of the man I am looking for."

"I tell you that's not my name. Look at the endorsement on that note."

The note in question had been signed with the name of "Sidney Domville, Upper Terrace, Bournemouth."

"It's no use, Dougal," Scott cried, "you are wanted by the police and you will have to go with me."

"What for?" the man asked.

Detective Scott knew the time had not yet come to let Dougal into the secret. The plan was to hold him until they secured evidence against him. He must be held for a minor offense while they were trying to prove him guilty of murder. That gave Scott his cue.

"You are wanted for forgery," he said.

Dougal made no resistance but went quietly with Scott. That word "forgery" seemed to have a quieting effect upon Samuel H. Dougal. Forgery is a serious crime, but at that time it did not lead to the gallows in England. For the moment, matters were quiescent, with Dougal sitting in his cell and thinking of ways and means of defeating the law.

But while Dougal was sparring for time the detectives were doing the same thing. They did not want him brought before the bar of the court until they had an opportunity of "getting the goods" on him. When Dougal was safely lodged in jail Detective-Inspector Scott went to Clavering and made his way to the Moat Farm. He had a force of trained men with him and he turned them loose with instructions to find clues. A pretty large order, that—but it soon brought results. In a closet they found



A short time later the only servant on the premises took leave abruptly.

a die by which the exact impression of Miss Holland's signature could be made on paper. In the drawer of a desk they discovered a fine-pointed pen. Also there were scraps of paper which showed that Dougal had practiced the writing of Miss Holland's name.

Here was evidence which was sufficient to convict him of forging the name of his victim. It was plain that after her disappearance—or death—he had continued to do business in her name. Her mail came to him regularly and from time to time he wrote out checks on her bank and had them cashed.

What the detectives wanted, however, was not proof of forgery but evidence that the missing woman had met with foul play. They continued their search and in the course of time they came across a discolored skull and some bones. That caused excitement for a while, but a scientist who was called in quickly ruined that sensation. He proved, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that they were very ancient and were the remains of some animal.

But Detective Scott was not discouraged by this unexpected set-back; he was not to be deterred by either skepticism or ridicule. He determined to make a thorough search of the ancient moat. A force of men was put to work; they dug a ditch and drained the moat. But they found nothing but a lot of rubbish and old bottles. The workers were sent to other parts of the farm and continued their digging for six long weeks. Naturally this sort of thing could not be kept up without exciting attention. The people from all parts of Essex flocked to Clavering. Vehicles were brought into play and excursions organized to satisfy the curiosity of those who wanted to be on hand when the remains were brought to light. Once again the efforts of the diggers came to naught.

Meanwhile Samuel H. Dougal demanded his discharge from prison on the ground that the authorities had no evidence on which he could be legally held.

Detective Scott managed by some flimsy pretext to have him held for another week. He was confident that they would "have the goods" by that time.

In their search for clues the detectives came in contact with an old man in the neighborhood who was popularly known as "the Pilgrim." This venerable person said that shortly after the disappearance of Miss Holland he had been called upon to cart dirt to the farm for the purpose of filling up a ditch in one of the remote corners of the estate. He was able to point out the spot and so once again Detective Scott called his squad together and they went at the new site with their picks and shovels.

One morning one of the workers found a woman's shoe on the end of his fork. Excitement ran high.

In a short time they found something else that was absolutely definite—the remains of a woman, fully clothed. It was found that she had been shot through the head. The corpse was taken to the greenhouse on the property and photographed.

It was a gruesome-looking object, but after they had brushed the earth from the remains they gradually discovered bits of proof which made it certain that this was the body of Camille Holland. A set of hairpins and a tortoise-shell comb were positively identified as belonging to the victim. The shoes were taken to the tradesman from whom she was in the habit of getting her footgear and he pointed out little peculiarities which were to be found in all the shoes he sold to Miss Holland. Her dressmaker was summoned and when she looked upon the bedraggled gown that had been found upon the dead

Dougal invited the police-man to make an inspection of the house.



body she said there was no doubt that it belonged to the poor woman.

But the final test, and probably the most important, came when the surgeons extracted the bullet from the head of the corpse. It was carried into the living-room of the house where Detective-Inspector Scott and one of his associates from Scotland Yard was waiting. It corresponded precisely with bullets which Scott found in the drawer of a bureau in the room of Samuel H. Dougal in the house of mystery.

Dougal had testified that he took the woman to a train at a certain hour upon the morning of the day in which she disappeared from sight. An official of the railroad refuted this by stating that there was no train for London until hours after the time mentioned by Dougal. Thus he was trapped by his own testimony.

The jury before whom he was tried did not waste much time in coming to a decision. They found him guilty of murder in the first degree and he was sentenced to death.

He presented a pathetic spectacle as he stood on the scaffold with the rope around his neck, waiting for the executioner to pull the trap that would send him to eternity. He made heroic efforts to present a brave front, but he was quite a different figure from the soldierly, erect man who had come with Miss Holland to that house of mystery in Essex. As he stood there the chaplain said to him in a low voice:

"Are you guilty, or not?"

Dougal's features worked convulsively; then he uttered one word in the faintest of whispers:

"Guilty!"

The next moment the executioner pulled the bolt—and the final chapter had been written to one of the most engrossing stories from real life in England's history.

A Million Miles in Sail

The authentic story of a Canadian skipper who has sailed for thirty-five years in windjammers and has rounded the Horn sixteen times.

As told to John Herries McCulloch

By CAPTAIN C. C. DIXON

I SUPPOSE it was inevitable that I should become a sailor, for all my ancestors were folk who went down to the sea in ships, and I was born in a Nova Scotia seaport just at the beginning of that period during which the fame of Bluenose skippers and Blue-nose clipper ships was spreading to every corner of the Seven Seas. My mother was the daughter of a shipbuilder who took some of his own ships to far ports. My father was a ship's master, and as he was proud to say, it was under the famous flag of the Black Ball line of winged record-breakers that he first trod the weather side of a quarter-deck. His father was a shipbuilder. Springing from stock like that, in an isolated country where money was hard to come by, where the North Atlantic, for a century before my time, had been regarded by Nova Scotians as the natural source of their livelihoods, I had a slim chance of cutting the hawser that held me to the hereditary calling.

The most vivid recollection I have of my childhood days had a stormy setting on the ocean. It carries me back to the year 1881. I was in the ship *S. Vaughn*, a nine-hundred-ton barque which my father was taking from Liverpool to Valparaiso, Chile. We were in the Irish Channel, not many miles from Dublin. The wind began to come strongly from the S. E.; and in the Irish Channel this invariably means a bad time for ships, because the center of the storm will pass the ship, these Irish tempests invariably heading E. and N. E. The sea was short and deep, and our ship soon began to drift toward the shore. We had reduced sail to two lower topsails, the foretopmast stays', and the mizzen stays', but we were drifting fast, and things looked bad. My father ordered the weather anchor to be dropped, and as the mate went forward to carry out the order, the foretopmast stays' was hauled down. Then the lee anchor was let go, to bring the ship's head up, and that done, the lower topsails were clewed up and made fast. The ship was now under bare sticks.

It is tricky work, dropping the anchors of a sailing-ship. In steam, you can control them, walking the windlass back with the engine till the anchor touches bottom, and then you can control the amount of slack. In a sailing-ship there must be enough slack forward of the windlass to allow the anchor to hit the bottom before the chain comes tight. If a skipper fails to see to that in a heavy sea, he will snap his cable and render his ship helpless, for against the smashing power of an unmanageable ship, ropes and cables will not hold. Next

*I must down to the seas again,
To the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship,
And a star to steer her by.
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song,
And the white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face,
And a gray dawn breaking.*

—John Masefield.

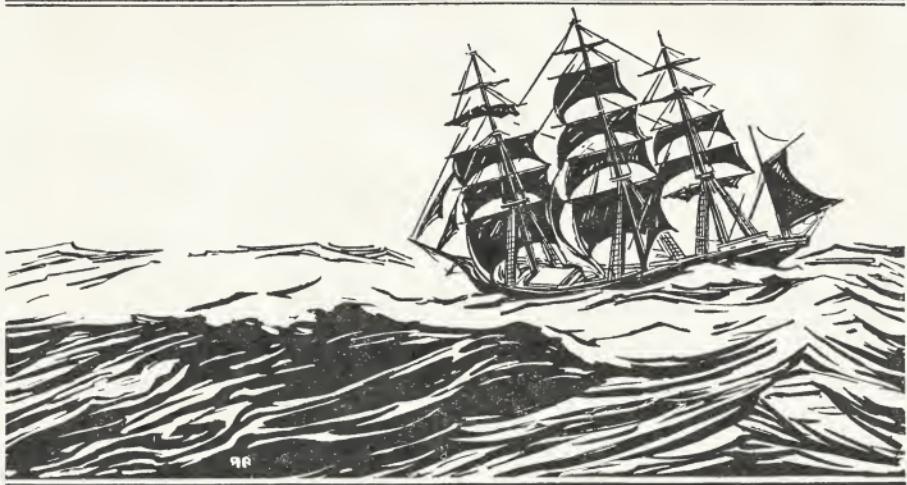
time you see a ship being cautiously edged into her moorings, in perfectly calm water, take notice of the tremendous strain that is put upon the hawsers when she is finally snubbed. Then try to visualize that ship in a raging sea, held by two anchor cables, and you will have a faint idea of

the terrific power held in leash when a sailing-ship is riding out a storm.

My father did not blunder. The ship was riding to her anchors, but the sea got worse, and as the day wore along, we began to go bows under more and more deeply, and a lot of water swept the deck. We were in about twelve fathoms, and the sea was of an ugly yellowish-green color, and full of sand. Night came along, and we were still hanging on grimly. Soon after darkness fell, my father came down to the cabin, and after exchanging a few words with my mother, lay down to snatch forty winks, for he had had a grinding day of it. Now, in a sailing-ship during a storm—and in a steamer, too, I dare say—outside sounds can be heard more plainly from the interior of a cabin than from the deck; this is because the incredible uproar above-decks is muffled. As he lay in his bunk, sleeping with one eye open, my father suddenly heard an ominous sound.

He was on his feet instantly. "The cable has snapped," he said to my mother; then he was gone. My mother clutched me and took me out to the companionway.

Nobody on deck had noticed the break. It was the long weather cable, ninety fathoms of it, that had given way. A murderous sea was running, and the ship was smothering herself. My father was up against a stark problem, the sort of problem only masters of sailing-ships confronted. A false judgment, a clumsy move, and his ship and every soul aboard would be lost. He consulted Ben Smith, the mate. Ben was a Nova Scotia man who later commanded many fine ships sailing out of Liverpool, and a better man never trod a quarter-deck. It was decided to cut away the masts, because the shortened-bight of the remaining cable was dragging the ship's bows deeply under water as every graybeard struck her, and the wind-pressure on the bare sticks was so great that it was clear to everybody that the cable would soon give way. Fortunately, the ship was slightly tide-rode, which brought the wind a little on the bow, so that there was a chance to cut away the masts successfully. For masts cannot be cut away under all conditions. They must fall over the side of a ship; if they should fall on the ship, they would work enormous damage and might easily kill every-



body aboard. It will be seen, therefore, that the wind must be on the side of the ship, if ever so slightly, so that the mast will be held from falling to windward while the lee rigging is being chopped through.

Many writers of thrilling sea-stories tell about chopping the masts themselves. That isn't done. A mast weighs between fifty and one hundred tons, and on account of its height it simply will not stand by itself if the ship is rolling. It must be supported firmly by the backstays and rigging; and when that support is removed, especially in a rough sea, the masts snap like clay pipestems.

Tide-rode as our ship was, the wind held the masts while the lee rigging was cut. This left the masts with only the weather rigging supporting them; this was cut, and the main and foremast went safely by the board, the main breaking clean at the deck, and the fore snapping about ten feet above deck. The mizzen was left standing. Being only a bare stick in a barque, it made little difference to the pressure on the cable, and it provided a temporary refuge for those aboard in case the ship should founder.

Things hadn't reached that desperate stage. The masts had gone overboard cleanly and were sunk by their own iron-work. But they were still held to the laboring ship by the fore and aft stays, which are not cut before the masts fall, because they are needed to prevent the masts from falling fore and aft along the deck. They drifted under the ship's bottom, and every time she was lifted by a sea she came down on the heavy wreckage with a thud that shook her from stem to stern. A ship's bottom will not stand much of this battering. My father and the mate therefore turned their attention to the bowsprit. It was under raging water for ten minutes at a time, and to its point was attached the heavy double stay that held the wreckage under the ship. If she was to be saved, that stay had to be cut. It was a man's job, going out on that submerged bowsprit, but Ben Smith tackled it. Lashed to the bowsprit, in the dark, under wicked water most of the time, he hacked away at the four-inch wire stays with an ax; it took him three hours to do the job, for he was striking in the dark at an object he couldn't see,

Once rid of the punishing wreckage, my father ordered the broken anchor chain to be hove in, and instead of putting another anchor on it, he shackled it to the end of the short cable and paid it out. The combined cable was so long that the bight of it—or as the landsman would say, the sag—held the ship, and her head eased considerably.

I had glimpses of all those desperate activities from behind my mother's skirts, though I didn't appreciate their full significance till I was years older. I remember how excited I was when Father came down to the cabin, after the cable had been lengthened, and wrote a message on a bit of paper. It was a pretty desperate message—for a Bluenose skipper. It gave the position of the helpless ship, and asked for a tug. The paper was placed in a cask; the cask was rigged with a weight in one end and a flag on the other, and cast overboard in the darkness. That cask was picked up next day on a lonely bit of the Irish coast, and an old Irishman hobbled nine miles across the country to hand its message to a telegraph operator. God rest the old man's bones!

Meantime, we waited anxiously, praying that the cable would hold. Dawn came at last, and not long afterwards a lifeboat came out and asked if we were ready to abandon the ship. My father said he wasn't, and the lifeboat went away. What we wanted was a tug, but no tug appeared, so we held out—for three more days. Toward the end of the fourth day the storm showed signs of abating, and tugs crept out from shore and took us in hand. But when the anchor was pulled up, it was found to have a broken ring. We had been closer to destruction than any of us dreamed.

Father went blind soon after we got ashore, and was taken to the hospital, where he stayed nearly a week till he got his sight restored. He had scarcely slept during three days and nights, and the salt and exposure and strain were too much for his eyes. The *S. Vaughn* was a sorry-looking ship, but this much could be said for her: she was cleaner than she had ever been before. She was, in fact, bleached. The water and spray that had swept her during the four-day storm was full of sand, and it

had scoured her most thoroughly. She was changed in appearance just as much as the walls of a grimy building are changed by the modern cleaners, and by the same process exactly. It wasn't any wonder that my father was blind for some days.

It took quite a while, I remember, to get the ship eased down to her new masts and rigging, but by the time we reached equatorial waters things were shipshape. I was very much excited about the equator. Having heard the usual stories about it, I expected to be

half roasted by the direct rays of the pitiless sun. I was soon disillusioned. It was hot enough crossing the line, but not so hot as the summer weather I had often encountered on shore in Canada, which hasn't the reputation of being torrid. The truth is that considerable humbug is current concerning equatorial temperatures on the sea. I find, by reference to my log-books, that I have crossed the equator fifty-one times—thirty-five times on the Atlantic and sixteen times on the Pacific. On each and every crossing I was in a sailing-ship, which gave me, sometimes, more opportunity to observe meteorological conditions than I desired. For eighteen years I kept a four-hourly meteorological log for the British Meteorological Office. This meant that I took readings every four hours by day and by night, for the number of years mentioned. I took them with carefully certified barometers, thermometers and hydrometers supplied by the British Meteorological Office; and all my reports, during those eighteen years, were classified as "Excellent." Blue-water skippers know what that means, so I may be pardoned if I seem to speak of marine temperatures with some assurance.

It is seldom that one encounters excessively hot weather on the equatorial seas. The highest temperature I ever recorded was 86 degrees Fahrenheit. That was just north of the equator, on the Atlantic, in October. Such a temperature would not be considered terribly high in New York or Montreal or London in midsummer; in almost any North American city midsummer temperatures of 100 degrees have been frequently recorded. Very seldom have I found temperatures running higher than 80 degrees. Ten Pacific crossings selected from my logs give an average temperature of 79 degrees, the highest being 82, which was taken in September, and the lowest being 75 degrees, which was taken in February. The Atlantic crossings give an average temperature practically the same as those on the Pacific. With regard to sea temperatures on the equator, I have no record of any above 80 degrees Fahrenheit, but north of Borneo I have recorded temperatures up to 86 degrees. These figures tell their own story.

That voyage to Valparaiso sticks out vividly in my memory, for besides being the first long one that I had taken, it was marked by a lot of very bad weather. When we were rounding Cape Horn, we ran into a typical storm of that dreaded region. We were carrying a cargo of coal, and in those days the regulations governing the disposition of an inflammable cargo were somewhat free and

easy. A violent westerly gale brought up a tremendous sea, and it struck so savagely that the barque lurched alarmingly under the impact. The cargo shifted—shifted so badly that our lee rail went under six feet of water and remained that way. It was impossible to stand on the tilted deck.

At the moment we were under two lower topsails, a mizzen staysail, and a foretopmast staysail, so that the crew couldn't get at the gear—it was buried with the lee rail.

The lower topsails were cut away to keep the ship from going clear over—the hands climbed aloft and cut the canvas close to the head of the sails. Then, to get the ship before the wind, the mizzen staysail halyards were let go, but the sail wouldn't come down, so great was the wind pressure. That meant cutting the sheet. But the rope part of it was below water, and darkness had fallen.

It was a nice little job, cutting that sheet! The mate lashed a sheath-knife to one end of a boat-hook, probed the rushing flood on our lee rail, and sawed away when he thought he had connected with the rope part of the submerged sheet. It was finally severed, and the sail blew away like a bit of wet paper. That relieved the dangerous pressure on the after end of the vessel, and it was hoped she would answer to the helm and so right herself.

But she wouldn't respond at first—it is seldom that a windjammer will when she is lying over badly; and we had to coax her for the most part of an hour till we went off before the wind. It was a fine predicament to be in off the Horn, for we couldn't square the yards on account of our port side being so deeply submerged, so we had to steer her that way all night to the eastward, till we got into the lee of an island. There, of course, the sea was smoother, and we went at the coal. It took five days to shovel it back into place, but when the barque got back on an even keel, we went ahead without further trouble.

My father made another voyage in the *S. Vaughn* to South America, but I wasn't with him, for I had been put into a school in England. I was with him a year later, however, when he took the *Marabout* of St. John, New Brunswick, to Manila. When we reached the vicinity of Karakatao Island, which lay between Java and Sumatra, we found ourselves moving through a sea of pumice stone. We thought for a time that the sea-floor had come up, for lack of a better explanation of the uncanny sea that surrounded us. The air was unusually dark, and seemed full of dust. Karakatao Island had disappeared!

We soon ascertained the cause of these phenomena. We had just missed annihilation in one of the greatest upheavals of nature the modern world has ever experienced—the eruption at Karakatao Island; and ours was one of the first ships to enter the devastated region. The story of the disaster, as it came to our ears at the time, sounded like a fable, but the evidence in support of it was before our eyes. Karakatao Island comprised about eighteen square miles, and its height above sea level ran



from three hundred to fourteen hundred feet. It had always had a temperamental volcano, but in 1883 the inferno broke loose and simply blew the island to atoms. A great many ships in its vicinity simply disappeared; nobody knew what became of them, for no signs of them were left to indicate their fate. The force of the subterranean explosion may be gauged from several phenomena that followed it. The water that took the place of the island is now a thousand feet deep in places. The air-wave caused by the explosion went back and forth to the Antipodes three times. The ocean wave caused by the upheaval went around the world. It reached the English Channel, eleven thousand miles away, going around the Horn and the Cape of Good Hope. The dust of the explosion was shot upwards to an altitude of seventeen miles. This dust put the entire coast in pitch-black darkness, day and night, for three days, and it remained in the atmosphere for three years, spreading gradually to both poles. It went around the earth in six weeks, covering a belt extending from the 30 N. Lat. to 45 S. It was the cause of gorgeous sunsets in many distant parts of the world for months after the catastrophe. Not many people remember this appalling disaster, but I shall never forget it, for we missed its vortex by a narrow margin, and I still carry clearly in my mind the dreadful scene of its aftermath—the frightening darkness, the sea of pumice stone, the vanished island, and the altered straits through which my father had to pick his way.

In the year 1889 my father became skipper of the *Erin's Isle*, and it was in this ship that I was introduced to fo'c'sle life, for I shipped in her as a deck-boy. The *Erin's Isle* was a famous ship. Her home port was Liverpool, but she was built in Nova Scotia by the celebrated John McFee, of St. John. McFee built five ships, and of these the *Erin's Isle* was the last to be floated, and the best. She had been built to meet the personal tastes of her owner, who, with his wife, went to sea in her. It was in this ship that William McFee, the well-known writer of sea stories, was born. As he said to me, in a letter which he wrote to me on November 30th, 1929:

"I was practically born on her. We were out six months from Calcutta to London. The *Isle* got into London, and I got out into the world, at the same time."

She was a beautiful full-rigged ship of 1645 tons register. Money had not been spared in her building. Her outside planking was twelve inches thick—four inches thicker than that of ordinary ships of her tonnage; and her inside flooring was twelve inches thick. A ship of her tonnage usually had a keelson four feet high, but hers was six feet six inches high. She was copper-fastened right up to her deep-loaded water line; most Nova Scotia ships were galvanized-iron fastened. With all this excess of planking she was a tremendously strong ship, but she was rather slow as a result. I was in her for seventeen years, in all parts of the world, and got to know her pretty well, but while I could do a lot with her, I always found her a little stiff.

My first voyage in her was from New York to Liverpool, which took us thirty-five days. From England we went to Rio de Janeiro, with a coal cargo. I remember that voyage vividly, for when we got to Brazil we found political conditions there very unsettled. It was the last year of the monarchy of that country, and as a result of the disorganization of public services there was an epi-

demic of yellow fever. We lost most of our crew at Rio as a result of it; and when we sailed again, it was with a shanghaied crew. In those days, the Rio waterfront was in the grip of crimps and boarding-masters, and a hard lot they were. It was impossible to pick up a crew without their coöperation. We had to pay one hundred dollars for every man brought aboard, and some of the poor devils weren't worth their salt. They were thrown into the ship like sides of beef, dead drunk or drugged, or both. We never knew for certain whether they were dead or alive till we got to sea; then it was the mate's job to sober them up, with the aid of salt-water douches and his heavy sea-boots.

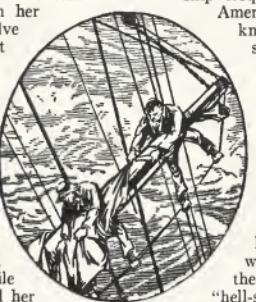
Shanghaiing started on the California coast in '49, during the time of the great gold-rush to that State. It was one of the first "rackets" practiced successfully in America. The gold fever was so virulent and catching that as soon as a ship let go her anchors in a California port the whole crew deserted. You could hardly blame the sailors, for many of them had been shanghaied on previous voyages; and life in a sailing-ship in those days was a real ordeal. There are always human vultures ready to prey upon their fellow-men, and so the unscrupulous boarding-master came into existence in California ports. I knew several of them, and cruel, greedy, bestial scoundrels they were, every man jack of them. It sickened the decent skipper to have to deal with such blood-suckers, but what could a skipper do? These boarding-masters came aboard incoming ships before the anchors were let go. They took the crew in hand immediately, filled them with drink, or drugged them, and the poor devils never regained consciousness until they were kicked out of the fo'c'sle of another outward-bound ship. These poor fellows got no money from the ship they had deserted, and as they generally had three months' wages against them on the second ship into which they had been shanghaied,—this being part of the graft collected by the crimps,—they never had a dog's chance of making a dollar at sea. It was next thing to pure slavery, with white men as the slaves; and many a good man went down under it, never to rise again.

There was another feature of life on the old windjammer that is written about a great deal, and which was a direct result of shanghaiing. The skipper of a sailing-ship frequently found himself sailing out of an

American port with a nondescript crew. He knew nothing about them. As they were sobered up, it was frequently found that they had never been to sea before. Many of them were worthless vagabonds, and feeling, as they did, that they had been the victims of foul treatment, they were usually very sullen and rebellious as they tackled their first jobs. With such a crew, the skipper's position may be appreciated. He was obliged to get his ship to sea, and he had to keep it out of trouble. So the mate simply kicked the rebellious hands to their jobs when quick action was demanded. This

the world began to hear about American "hell-ships," in which a cruel, hard-fisted bully of a mate knocked sailors down when they didn't move quickly enough to please him. There was enough of this bullying, to be sure, and it reflects no credit whatever upon sailing-ships; but novelists who were never at sea in sail have greatly exaggerated the conditions that did exist.

We sailed from Rio for Calcutta with our shanghaied crew; and to give them their due, they worked into t'



various duties fairly well, considering that some of them had never been to sea previously. We had favoring weather, and after an uneventful passage we reached the mighty and storied Ganges. Here I came into contact, for the first time, with Calcutta pilots. They were, in those days, regarded as the real aristocrats of the pilot services of the world, as they in fact were, for they obtained their original charters from the old East India Company, and they took over the most famous ships plying the Seven Seas. In Mark Twain's time to be a Mississippi pilot was to be an honored autocrat of the world of ships; magnify this degree of eminence a hundred times, and you approximate the austere superiority of a Calcutta pilot. They were all Englishmen, and they lived and acted like princes of principalities. When they boarded a ship off False Point, they brought a retinue of servants with them. Each pilot had five personal servants—a leadsmen, a valet and two or three cooks. They never ate the ship's food, but brought aboard enough rich provender to break down a banquet table. And as for working, the Calcutta pilot was quite above that sort of thing. He reclined on a long chair on the ship's poop, sipping the finest whisky Scotland could produce, and if the heat seemed to bother him, a servant appeared with a fan.

But these pampered aristocrats of the world of ships knew their jobs. They had to. It took four days to go up to Calcutta from the entrance of the Hoogli River, which is a branch of the Ganges. The river was full of dangerous shoals, and the current was very strong. The James and Mary shoal was the one that was feared the most. It was quicksand, and if a ship touched it, she was as good as lost, for she turned sideways in the current, rolled over, and soon sank from sight in the grasping sand.

As we approached this far-famed shoal, we soon sensed its threat, for a man stationed himself at the tug's hawser, with an ax in his hand. His job was to sever the hawser if our ship touched the bar. We crossed it successfully, however, at high water. We could see scores of alligators lying along the river bank; they were the reason why no sailors escaped from vessels which were unlucky enough to touch the sinister James and Mary shoal.

Those were indeed glorious days for Calcutta. All the finest sailing-ships in the world sailed up the mighty Ganges to the great docks. One met famous skippers of great-winged nonpareils, greyhounds of the China tea trade, record-breakers of the Australian wool trade, training-ships of the British navy, battered old tramps out from Glasgow and Newcastle, and sturdy ships from the ports of Nova Scotia and New England. There would sometimes be as many as one hundred and fifty ships lying off the docks at one time, and there was business for them all. To sail up the Ganges in the days before steam was an experience never to be forgotten.

On the way home we went around the Cape of Good Hope. Rounding the Cape, from the Indian Ocean, sailing-ships came close in to Africa closely, so as to get the benefit of the currents, till Cape Agulhas was reached. I have often noticed that writers of sea-stories invariably paint Cape Horn as the worst point in the world for bad sailing; but shippers of sailing-ships know that the Cape of Good Hope is a much more difficult proposition to tackle. The

wind varies off the Horn, but off Good Hope it is generally westerly, which means that it meets the homeward bound vessel right in the teeth. These westerly winds off the Cape sometimes lasted for weeks, and when they did, no sailing-ship could beat around the Cape against them. The wind may blow with the force of a moderate gale for days. Then it may drop to a nice breeze that could be used to beat around the Cape. But it was seldom that a skipper dared to put on sail under those conditions, for the chances were that the gale would come up again so quickly that he would not have time to get his sail in.

When we got to the Cape, we found no fewer than sixty-seven ships there ahead of us, all trying to get around. Some of them had been there for weeks. One big American clipper came down past us, and with all her sail out, she soon left us in her wake. But she didn't get far. We saw her three weeks later, back where we first sighted her; and she had lost all her sails. It took us thirty-five days to go from Cape St. Francis around the point of Agulhas, a distance of a hundred miles. And during all of those weary days the sun was shining brightly out of a cloudless blue sky. No wonder that the Flying Dutchman myth originated among sailors who were baffled by the Cape of Good Hope gales. When you had fought those westerly winds for six weeks, you began to think it quite possible that a ship could forever beat against the head-winds without making progress.

When we finally got away, we were pretty far out, and found ourselves in the Cape current. We were carrying a cargo of dry bone-meal; and to avoid getting so much water on deck, the ship was stood off farther into the current, where she took the seas broadside. I have never seen worse seas; they reached a height of forty feet and came at us like perpendicular walls, almost foundering us. The *Erin's Isle* never did steer well, and we had our hands full to get the better of those vertical walls of water. As a matter of fact, when we got to St. Helena we found that the ship was a foot deeper in the water than she was at the Cape, as a result of the bone-meal absorbing the continuous deluge of water that came aboard in the long battle with the Cape currents and winds.

I am tempted here to say something about ocean waves, for it was a hobby of mine to measure and photograph them in all parts of the world, under storm conditions. I have heard sailors swear that they have encountered waves reaching a height of a hundred feet. I too have seen waves in the South Pacific that appeared to be a hundred feet high, but in reality they were not half that height.

I can explain why in a few words. Seen from one end of a sailing-ship, or even from the center of a long ship, when her stern is down in the hollow, the advancing wave-crest is in line with some spot high up on the main-mast, far above all deck structures, themselves fifty or sixty feet above sea-level. But the end of the ship you are looking at is down in a hollow, and your eye takes in a slanting surface that may easily be two hundred feet in extent, and it is so steeply inclined to the ship's position that it appears almost vertical. The height of a sea on the side of a ship is not so apt to be overestimated, because the view of it is shorter, but its height, too, can be grossly overestimated if the roll of the ship is toward the advancing crest.

Another cause of tales of hundred-foot waves is the



height to which the water is thrown after the wave hits the vessel. It may easily be thrown upwards for a hundred feet, but one could not say the wave was a hundred feet high. The greatest authority in the world on ocean waves and their peculiarities is Vaughan Cornish, who devoted many years to a scientific study of them. In the Atlantic, the largest he observed was forty-eight feet high, with a length between crests of 560 feet. Incidentally, the length of a wave is the distance between its crest and the following one—not the distance along its crest, as many people believe. Waves do reach a height of sixty feet during a succession of storms off Cape Horn, and I can easily believe that they reach an equal height in bad storms off the Cape of Good Hope, where the westerly gales meet the Cape currents, piling up terrific vertical seas. Where they encounter smooth sloping surfaces, such as icebergs, waves rise to incredible heights. I have seen them climb big iceberg off Cape Horn to a height that could not have been less than 150 feet. On the coast of Breaksea Island, on the south coast of Australia, deep water comes right up to smooth sloping granite cliffs, so that the sea does not break. On this coast, in a fierce westerly gale, the crests of waves have been known to mount to the island lighthouse, and it is 384 feet above the level of the sea.

Whenever I get thinking about waves, my mind veers round to the worst storm I ever encountered at sea—in the North Atlantic, a few days out from New York. It came right on the heels of my first voyage around the Cape of Good Hope. We'd taken the *Erin's Isle* up through the Pacific to New York, and after discharging our cargo of bone-meal, we took in a cargo of barrel-oil and set sail for Liverpool. In order to pass under Brooklyn Bridge we had to take down the topgallant masts, and when we started to put them up again at sea we were working in cold, dirty, midwinter weather. To make matters worse, we had an awkward crew aboard. We ran into trouble when we sent up the royal yards. The second mate had gone aloft to superintend the work, and just as the yard was put across, the lift broke, throwing him and another sailor to the deck, 160 feet below. The deck-hand was killed instantly, but the second mate struck the ropes as he fell, and bounding from them, landed on his knees on the deck. It was a spectacle that sickened me, and I shrink even yet from visualizing it too sharply. Both the legs of the second mate were broken, and the bones penetrated the deck planking for more than an inch. Fortunately the poor fellow lost consciousness when he struck the deck, and he was carried to a bunk, where my father did all he could for him.

Shortly afterward we met the steamer *St. Louis*, and we hailed her and asked for a doctor. There was one aboard, and he came aboard our ship, dosed the second mate with morphine, and had him transferred to the steamer. He told my father that the man had a very slim chance of living, and his somber forecast was not wrong, for the injured man died soon after his legs were amputated in a Philadelphia hospital. There was an odd

sequel to this melancholy affair. The news of the mate's death was sent to his young wife—they had been married less than a year; but by the time the letter reached her, she too was dead.

That distressing accident was the prelude to further trouble on that voyage. A few days later, toward the end of the day, the sky became a solid dome of black. It resembled an inverted black bowl. Across it, as the afternoon wore on, parallel ribbons of scud began to fly at terrific speed, just as if they were coming from a giant reel. About ten minutes before sunset there was a break in the western horizon, and through this crack the yellow setting sun shone, like an evil eye. As the sun slowly sank it changed to an orange hue, and the black dome of the sky turned to a pale green. The sun, now almost out of sight, became a brilliant crimson, and the flying scud took on that hue.

I have sailed through tropical seas when they were made weird by atmospheric disturbances, and I have rowed through the silent jungles of the Sargasso Sea on a moonlight night, but I have never seen a more unreal, a more vivid, or a more awesome sea than the one I have tried to describe. Coming on the heels

of the tragedy I have just related, it filled the fo'c'sle hands with superstitious dread. The carpenter, a Finn, was sure that the ship was haunted by the ghosts of the men who had been killed, and his superstitious yarns drove the already nervous crew to the verge of panic. My father was taking note of things, of course, and at the psychological moment he gave the Finn the rough side of his tongue in the hearing of the hands, which brought them all round to their senses. The Finns are good sailors, but they inherit the quaint superstitions and legendary nonsense of their race and these sometimes cause a great deal of trouble in a ship.

Be that as it may, the Finn's grisly yarns were soon cut short by the storm that followed. When the sun sank, the aperture on the horizon, through which the crimson light gushed, closed and we were in complete darkness. The ship was head-reaching, under three lower topsails and a foresail, and the rain and spray swept her with terrific force. It seemed to come from every point of the compass, and it struck one's face with the force and sting of sand. Presently my father appeared on the poop, and he ordered the mate to prepare to heave to. The yards were braced sharp up, and all hands were ordered off the main-deck. Then, through the darkness, came the order:

"All the watch lay aft. Other watch go below."

The deck-watch gathered on the lee side of the poop to await orders. They were quiet now, and obedient. They sensed that a storm of extraordinary violence was about to break, and they placed themselves with childlike docility and trustfulness in the hands of my father. He had the reputation of being able to handle a ship with more than ordinary judgment and skill, and he deserved the reputation.

The wind grew violent. All sense of direction was ob-



literated by the tempestuous gale, the swirling spray and rain, and the darkness. Within a circle of six feet men and things were dimly visible; beyond that circle was impenetrable darkness. The uproar of the storm was appalling. At first it had been a dull roar; but as the wind increased in velocity, this roar sharpened till it became a steady shriek. Every stick and every rope in the ship was screaming, and the symphony was so ear-splitting that one could not hear the heavier noises of the great seas that were smashing over the weather side of the laboring ship. Her lee side was becoming deeply submerged, for with a cargo of barrel-oil a ship isn't stiff. To make matters worse, our main hatch had been left partly open to prevent gas from accumulating in the hold. All the fenders, hauling lines, hawsers, and stores had been lashed across the hatches, which made things awkward.

Suddenly we heard a sharp crackling noise above the shriek of the gale in the rigging. The mate, who was with my father on the poop at the moment, started forward to see what had happened. The darkness had cleared a little by this time, and we could see the outline of the forward masts. Some one shouted that the topgallant stick had broken off. The weather backstays had broken, so that the mast hung by them across the stays, swinging back and forth like a gigantic pendulum. With the yards, it weighed in the neighborhood of two tons, and it was striking the foremast and shocking the whole ship. The terrific battering had to be stopped, if the ship was to be saved, so the mate came back out of the darkness, ordered two men to go with him, and the trio went forward to cut away the back-stays. They were gone about an hour, but they got the job done, and the swinging battering-ram went overboard with its gear.

Just as daylight was breaking, a giant wave smashed over the entire length of the ship. For the most part of a minute we couldn't see the ship at all, but when she shook off the water, we saw plenty. All the stuff had been swept from the main hatch, and it was wide open. The ship went over till the lee side of the hatch was under water, and a stream twelve feet wide and two or three deep poured into the bowels of the ship. A deluge like that, entering the hold, will soon sink a ship, and the situation was critical in the extreme.

All hands were called, but they couldn't be found. They'd allowed the yellow in their make-up to show through, and had stowed themselves away in the darkness. The mate found one or two of them after a quick search, but they wouldn't stand up, even when he put his sea-boots to them savagely, so he left them for a future reckoning and went to work on the opened hatch with the carpenter and the negro cook and myself. The hatches were floating around in six feet of sea-water, and it was a nice job, getting them where they were wanted. Sometimes they were completely outside the ship, on her lee side, but they'd swing back onto her with the back-wash of the heav' seas. One by one they were collared and put into place. It was a task for me, but it was done at last, and the flow of the water into the hold was stopped. We knew, by the dead motion of the ship, that she had plenty of water in her, but we were scarcely prepared for the discovery that we couldn't sound the pumps! There was eight feet of water in the hold—a thousand tons of it.

The deck damage was enormous. The forward house

had been completely wrecked. Its doors had been yanked out, and everything inside had been swept out to sea. All the skylights on the poop had been smashed, and two feet of water sloshed about in the cabins, hitting the ceiling with every staggering roll of the ship. Her lee side was a mass of frayed ropes and broken wires. They had gone out through the wash-ports and had come in over the rail with the undertow, again and again—and had been wound around the spare spars and the standing rigging. The tough, heavy material had been completely frayed out and matted together so badly that it took the crew two days to chop it away from the ship.

As for the sails, we hadn't any aloft, except a lower topsail. The gaskets on the others had been chafed by the wires of broken spars, and the sails, blowing open, had been torn away like bits of cotton rags, leaving nothing but some ends that cracked in the gale like machine-guns in action.

All in all, the stout old *Erin's Isle* had taken about all the punishment she could stand. Just a little more of it, and she would have gone to the bottom.

I FIND, on looking through my logs, that my voyages in sail totaled more than one million miles. Here are a few of the long tricks, picked at random, with the mileages; they indicate how the total was attained:

From New York to Rio de Janeiro.....	5,700 miles.
From Rio de Janeiro to Calcutta.....	10,500 "
From Calcutta to New York.....	13,400 "
From Rio de Janeiro to Sydney, N. S. W....	9,500 "
From Sydney to Gibraltar.....	13,500 "
From Portland, Oregon, to London.....	19,100 "
From St. John, Canada, to Adelaide.....	14,120 "
From Philadelphia to Fusan, Korea.....	20,066 "

In the old days of sail, when ships had to battle with contrary winds, long and tortuous passages were all too frequent, and it didn't take many of them to reach a substantial mileage. The longest trick I ever made was from Philadelphia to Korea, as shown above. I made it in the *Elginshire*. That voyage, from the eastern ports of North America to China and Japan, was the longest that fell to the lot of the old clipper, especially if it happened to be made during the season of the N. E. monsoons. At that season of the year it was almost impossible to beat up to the China Sea. It was often attempted, but it usually meant months of unavailing struggle. So in the monsoon season the wise skipper of a windjammer ran his easting down until he passed Australia, and then headed straight north through the Pacific to the latitude of port. The voyage from New York to China around South Africa and Australia was known as the Eastern Passage, and it often ran over twenty thousand miles. Some fast clippers made it in one hundred days and less. It can readily be understood that when a lad made a voyage like that, he knew a good deal about the sea and sailing-ships when he stepped ashore again. It was a concentrated course in seamanship—something like a man learning the French language by establishing himself in a French community where nothing but the French language is spoken. Hence one of the greatest of sea-stories, Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast" was a record of one short voyage from the Atlantic to the Pacific and back. The first ship I took around Cape Horn was the *Arctic Stream*,



a full-rigged ship sailing out of Glasgow. We were bound from Rotterdam to Portland, Oregon. I had, on that voyage, the worst mixed crew I ever took to sea. It consisted of Italians, Portuguese, Danes, Russians, Swedes and a few "Liverpool Irish." The last-mentioned were the worst of the lot to handle. We used to call them "sea-lawyers," because they knew so much about a sailor's rights and so little about the actual handling of a ship. A skipper always knew when he had some of that fry aboard, for they invariably made trouble in the fo'c'sle by quarreling with their shipmates or complaining incessantly about the food or the discipline. Nowadays they would be called agitators, or Reds. They certainly thrived on trouble—if it affected others.

But to be fair to them, I didn't have serious trouble with them. In fact, I never had much trouble with my crews. You read a great deal of arrant nonsense about the crudeness and savagery of fo'c'sle life in the old sailing-ships. I have shipped some pretty rough-looking customers in my time, but taking them by and large, they were a decent lot of men after they settled down to their daily tasks. I have taken crews to sea that, in my opinion at least, were superior to the crew of many a fancy city office—in looks, in manliness, and in intelligence. I have been ashore a few years now, living in great cities, and I speak the unvarnished truth when I say that I have heard more obscene talk and unhealthy discussions in the lounge-rooms of fashionable clubs than I ever heard at sea.

I had a good chance to break in my nondescript crew, for we hung around the Straits of Dover for a week or two, fighting contrary winds. We made five attempts to get away before we succeeded; but when we did get away, we bowled briskly through the N. E. trades to the Doldrums. The Doldrums is the name given to the more or less triangular area of comparative calm that lies between the west coast of Africa and Brazil; it is formed by the meeting of the N. E. and S. E. trades. Coming down with the N. E. trades, you have to decide which longitude you will cross the equator on, because the trick is to keep the N. E. trades as long as possible and still get the S. E. trades at the earliest possible moment. The trades come closer together near the Brazilian coast than they do on the African coast. Sometimes they meet on the former coast, but on the African coast they may be a thousand miles apart. So if the skipper of a sailing-vessel veered too far over toward the African coast he invariably ran into calms, while if he chose to hug the Brazilian coast too closely, he ran the risk of getting on a lee shore.

We got into this ticklish latitude in the bad season. That is to say, the wind was from the south. So we got two weeks of calm before we picked up the S. E. trades. It was probably just as well, for it gave me a chance to put the crew under discipline, and they forgot their grievances, real and fancied, in holystoning the decks, painting the rigging and fishing for sharks. I saw to it that they had lots of opportunity to enjoy the fishing for sharks. You catch a shark, from the deck of a sailing-ship, with a huge steel hook that hangs from a chain. To get the hook into his mouth, the shark turns over—just like a boy biting a smooth apple in a tubful of water on Hallowe'en. Because the shark employs this simple technique to avoid the chain to which the hook dangles, sailors and others have come to believe that a shark always turns over on his back to bite. That is not the case at all. I have often seen them

bite at unattached objects without altering their normal swimming position; all they have to do is swim over the object. Sailors also believe that sharks don't die until sundown. That too is mere superstition, based on the fact that a shark's muscular reactions continue for hours after he is dead. At sundown, of course, the sailor ceases to see the reactions; hence his superstition. I have kept a shark's heart beating for hours in warm water, but the same thing could be done, I fancy, with the heart of any of the big fishes.

All the sailor superstitions regarding sharks arise out of the fact that these fishes are supposed to attack human beings, and they probably do, though I have never come across an authentic case of one attacking a man. So when they catch a shark, sailors generally wreak their vengeance upon it. Swimming ahead of every shark is a little fish known as the pilot fish. Sailors believe that this little fish—he ranges from eight to eighteen inches in length, and is marked with blue and white bands—guides the shark to food, and is never attacked by his big follower. But more likely the pilot fish is a hanger-on, simply following the big killer to food; and as for being immune from attack, he is in no great danger anyway, for he is much too quick for the speediest shark.

OFF Rio de la Plata we ran into our first bad storm, One of the "Pamperos" so common in that latitude. The first sign we got of it was a dense cloud of dragonflies, butterflies and small birds. They had been blown off shore, three hundred miles away. They completely covered the ship, filling every nook and cranny, and clinging to the sails and rigging. The barometer was low but steady. Presently black clouds appeared, and I decided to reduce sail. So we took in the royals, the topgallants, the light staysails, and the crossjack, so that all that remained up were the foresail and six topsails. I really didn't think the blow would be severe so far off-shore; but I hadn't much time to speculate on the matter, for the wind struck us very suddenly and heeled the ship over till her lee rail was under water.

"Lower away the topsails," roared the mate.

The wind was so strong, however, and the ship was over so far that the yards wouldn't come down.

"Man the topsail down-haul!" yelled the mate. Still the yards wouldn't come down; so I ordered the helm to be put hard up to keep the ship off before the wind, and had the mizzen-staysail brought down. The ship answered to the helm then, and went off before the wind, and with the pressure eased, the yards came down easily. The hands were then ordered aloft to furl the upper topsails; and that done, I brought the ship back to wind and course and let her head-reach till the storm blew itself out. It was a nasty sudden storm that might have worked great damage, but the crew stood to their tasks creditably, and we got away scot-free.

Southward we proceeded till we made land near the Straits of Lemaire, which lie between the mainland of South America and Staten Island. We began now to see an occasional albatross, the great bird that welcomes the sailor to that bleak and immense oceanic expanse where a ship may go right around the world without sighting land. The crew amused themselves by fishing for these birds, and we soon had specimens of them on the deck, for it is not very difficult to catch an albatross with a hook and line. You use a hook that is not barbed, and bait it with a piece of fat pork. The albatross swallows



the bait without much ceremony. The hook generally catches in the curved tip of the great bird's beak, which is composed of a horny substance that seems impervious to pain, and the big bird is then dragged into the ship, where it doesn't take him long to spit out the hook. Once on the deck he is rather helpless, for he is not used to walking on planking, and there is not enough room for him to take off by wing. Like an airplane, he needs a lot of room to get into the air.

I find that many people think this bird of the Southern Ocean wastes is becoming extinct, but the belief no doubt springs out of the fact that little is heard of it nowadays, because modern shipping routes seldom traverse its domain longitudinally, and those steamers that cross it going north and south are traveling so rapidly that little is seen of the bird. In the days of windjammers ships battled for weeks across its haunts, and it was the most interesting living thing that the weary sailors had to look at. It is found south of the 30th parallel of south latitude, and is encountered down as far as the 60th parallel. Its domain, therefore, covers an area of approximately twenty-seven million square miles, and there are probably 1,500,000 of the birds in existence. The albatross is a lone flyer, and it may be easily understood that in these days of fast steamers and ocean short-cuts, little is seen of him.

In point of fact, he passed out of the vocabulary of the sea with the windjammers, but he has not passed out of existence. There are at least seven species of the bird, but the best-known one is that called the wandering albatross. This big fellow deserves a word or two in passing, for in my opinion, he is the noblest and most impressive bird that flies. I caught one, while running down my easterly to Australia, that measured twelve feet from wing-tip to wing-tip. He weighed twenty-four pounds, and from tail to beak measured four feet one and one-half inches. I have heard of specimens that were said to measure fifteen and eighteen feet from wing-tip to wing-tip, but I find difficulty in believing that they ever attain to such a wing-spread, for the mature specimens of any of the species are quite uniform in size.

When the bird emerges from the mother egg, he is just a big powder-puff of a Hudson seal brown, with a huge pink bill, violet eyes that any flapper would envy, and feet of a delicate flesh-tint. Up till the time he is about the size of a domestic goose he is still a big fluffy baby. With each moult, however, he becomes more and more white. At the time of his first flight, which takes him around the world, all the under surface of his great wings are white, but all the rest of his body is still brown. With further moults the body becomes speckled, then white on the under part, and as the bird ages, the white spreads till the whole body is white, except the back of the wings, which remains brown. All in all, the albatross is a noble bird, and it is not to be wondered at that superstitious sailors believed that the souls of skippers drowned at sea reappeared in the forms of these winged wanderers of the ocean wastes. I used to laugh at the idea, but wiser men than I am believe that this transmigration of souls is a reality, and I have seen so many queer things in years of knocking around the world that I am not so ready as I once was to laugh at things I don't understand.

It is generally believed that these big birds live on the refuse of ships. They do nothing of the sort. They existed in the Southern Ocean wastes before ships sailed the seas, and they still live there. Their real food is the squid, or as it is more commonly called, the devil-fish. These squids are found everywhere in the Southern Ocean,

and the albatross can make short work of the small ones. The bird's jaws and throat can be distended like those of a snake. I have found a chunk of squid weighing two pounds in the stomach of a full-grown bird.

There is endless fascination in watching these great birds on the wing. When a strong wind is blowing, they swoop through the air for hours on end without moving their wings, making use of the currents in the same manner that the latest man-made gliders do. For days on end they will follow a ship, making probably a thousand miles each day as they swoop round and round the object of their curiosity. I used to watch them from the weather side of the quarter-deck, and I was enthralled by the majesty of their movements through the air. So perfectly are they formed for flight through the air that they can rocket past your head at the rate of a mile a minute without making the slightest noise. Noble birds! They connote, in my mind, a day that has gone—the day of the great-winged ships that raced through the southern wilderness of water, where land almost ceases to figure in the daily calculation of the navigator.

We slipped into the Straits of Lemaire, and made preparations for Cape Horn weather, lashing the gear and examining all the running-gear and the yards for defects. There is a perceptible tenseness in a sailing-ship as she approaches that dreaded and dreadful place Cape Horn. There, a ship meets the wild force of the Southern Ocean rollers as they pile up on the comparative shallows of the continental shelf; it is like coming out of the shelter of a harbor into a gale-swept sea, and no blue-water sailor ever thought himself initiated to fo'c'sle life until he had been through these dangerous waters. The Straits of Lemaire are about five miles wide, and in them terrific tide-rips are encountered. These tide-rips are made much more dangerous by the fact that the sea-floor in the Straits is deeply ridged, which causes violent overfalls in which a sailing-ship will not steer. Still, on the whole, it is best to go through them, though many skippers preferred to take the longer route around Staten Island.

It was early in December when we entered the Straits, so that we had the advantage of summer weather and nearly twenty hours of daylight every day. So we slipped through the sheltered channel, with nothing above the topgallants. As soon as the ship got clear of the Straits we were promptly introduced to Cape Horn weather. A stiff wind was blowing, and in less time than it takes to

tell about it, great breakers were tumbling in over the weather side of the ship, and the decks were awash. My first battle with Cape Horn had commenced. We fetched over to the S. W., making good headway, and in the afternoon of the first day passed the Diego Ramirez Rocks, which lie south of Cape Horn.

The Horn itself is an island. These Diego Ramirez Rocks are really the last visible extremity of the gigantic mountain range that begins in Alaska and sinks into the ocean depths off Cape Horn—to rise out of the ocean again in the Antarctic wastes.

They are a grim pile of bare rocks, rising out of the sea to a height of two hundred feet, and they have claimed many a sailing-ship, for the terrific seas smash over them constantly, and from the western side they can scarcely be seen for spray. We gave them a wide berth, and battled southward with a W. N. W. wind until it shifted, as it usually does, to W. S. W., when we turned to the north. We were about one hundred and fifty miles south of the Horn itself.

On the way in we saw a homeward-bound clipper ship.



She was under full sail, and passed us like a flying cloud as she ran down her easterly on the way home from Australia to England. Her green hull marked her as an Aberdeen wool-clipper. We hoisted the ship's number, but the clipper was going so fast that all she did was hoist the answering pennant before she sank out of sight behind the gray turmoil of leaping, tumultuous seas. It would have taken a fast steamer to have kept up to her.

We worked up east of the Horn itself, then tacked and passed west of it, between it and the islands to the north. This gave us the advantage of smooth water, and with favoring winds we were around in the second long reach. It was what might be called a perfect passage in perfect weather — certainly, it was the smoothest I ever made, but even so, heavy seas were continually breaking over the ship, and we saw enough of the Horn to realize what a fearful place it is. The entire region south of the Magellan Straits is a compact archipelago, a series of bleak mountainous islands that range in size from ten to fifty square miles, and from fifty to nine thousand feet in height. Against these rocky ramparts the huge breakers smash with terrific force, and when a real gale is blowing, the whole tip of South America trembles with the incredible shock of the combat.

I once did some official sounding among these islands, and gloomier sea-channels I have never seen. Heaven help the shipwrecked sailor who found himself cast upon these barren islands; his fate was as sure as if he had been drowned with his ship. They do support a few natives, known as Terra del Fuegians, a dwarfed race of nomads who go about stark naked in that bitter climate. As far as I could find out, and I had several opportunities to observe them, they do not cultivate the land, and seem to live chiefly on shellfish.

In beating around the Horn in sail, skippers usually stood south for eighteen hours, and then came in. This procedure was the cause of many of the sea tragedies off the Horn, for the inexperienced navigator sometimes underestimated the force of the currents setting in toward the Horn. They sometimes failed to realize that a ship coming in would cover the distance in six or ten hours, and one can realize their horror when, on a pitch-dark night, beating against a strong westerly wind, they suddenly saw the terrible rocks of the Horn looming up over their bows. The most satisfactory procedure was to fight west to the 80th meridian and then turn north. That, of course, was easier said than done. Sometimes it meant many weeks of beating back and forth, and those long fights with the westerlies and heavy seas gave the Horn its bad reputation among sailors.

The worst feature of a voyage around it, apart from the ever-present danger of being shipwrecked, was its sustained discomfort. The weather is very similar to that encountered in the north of Scotland, and it chills a man to the marrow. But the Horn is not a place where ice-

coated ships wend their way through endless ice-floes, and if I seem to contradict writers of sea-fiction in saying so, I can only add that I am speaking of the Horn as I saw it, and it was my fortune to see it in many moods. I went around it sixteen times, in sail, and most of the passages were made during the winter months. I took four-hour meteorological readings on every passage. The lowest temperature I ever recorded in Horn waters was 32½ degrees Fahrenheit, which was on a winter passage. The lowest summer temperature I ever recorded was forty degrees Fahrenheit. Neither temperature, of course, will freeze sea-water.

The reputation of the Horn for frigid weather came, as I say, from the sustained discomfort of a voyage around it. In the old English sailing-ships, no fires were allowed in the fo'c'ste, and the crews were not permitted to dry their soaked clothes in



the cook's galley. The prevailing notion among the old-fashioned British shipowners was that a sailor who was comfortable wasn't alert. They wouldn't even allow a weather-cloth on the poop-deck to shield the officer on watch from the biting wind. I have the greatest admiration for British shipowners, past and present: they were grand men; they are grand men. They have been responsible for most of the shipping reforms; and yet, paradoxical as it may seem, they stubbornly opposed every reform that promised a bit of extra comfort for the men who toiled in their ships.

Think of it! In the old days of sail, in my time, a sailor got no soft bread, no butter, no milk and no vegetables. In lieu of bread he was given hard biscuits, and the old-fashioned Liverpool biscuits were so hard that they went by the name of "round-tiles." A man with poor teeth couldn't eat them. And in the fo'c'stles of the old windjammers there wasn't even a table to eat from. Reforms were so slow in coming that the British Shipping Act of 1854 was not altered until 1894; and when the 1894 Act came into force, introducing butter, milk, soft bread, canned vegetables and potatoes to the fo'c'ste, there was a loud wail on the part of British shipowners. Fat old millionaires of Liverpool grew purple when they thought about it, and even the bishops were inclined to warn the British public once again that decadence would follow swiftly on the heels of any legislation that made the lower classes comfortable.

No wonder, I repeat, that Cape Horn was a dreaded place. The ship that fought the westerly gales there soon became saturated with the water that was constantly coming aboard. In the winter months, there were only four or five hours of daylight. The sailors were never dry, and more often than not they slept in their wet clothing, rather than hang it up in the damp and chilly fo'c'ste. Day after day, week after week, the men put up with conditions like those, till they were utterly miserable. Quite often, as a result of the irritation caused by the dampness and saltiness of their clothes, they developed

sea-boils and raw sores that would not heal. Naturally, when they got back to warmer latitudes, they told hair-raising stories about their experiences off the Horn.

Of course, in the region of the Horn, you are in Antarctic waters. To the south lies the somber South Pole region, the great Antarctic ice barrier. Icebergs therefore are plentiful in the sailing lanes, and these Cape Horn bergs are the largest ever encountered in any sea. They reach incredible sizes. The biggest one ever observed—it was in 1860, in the days of the clipper runs to Australia—was L-shaped, and it was fifty miles long on one leg, and thirty miles long on the other. This monstrous berg remained in the waters off the Horn for months. During the period several ships disappeared off the Horn, and it was supposed by many that they ran into this floating menace. One can see how easily a skipper would do that, during a stormy night. Running parallel to the wall of the great berg, but probably twenty miles away from it, he would naturally suppose that he would presently run out beyond the extremity of it. What a scene of horror would be enacted when the skipper suddenly saw, looming up ahead of him, the other great arm of the berg. From it there would be no escape. The sea, crashing upon the glassy face of the ice-mountain for probably two hundred feet, would smash the ship against it as one would smash a fragile toy against a stone wall.

These southern icebergs are quite different from those seen in northern waters. The northern ones have, as a rule, pinnacles, while these that drift up from the Antarctic wastes are generally flat on top.

One that I encountered off the Horn appeared to be two distinct bergs when I first sighted it, and the two bergs were quite a distance apart. Our course lay between them. I didn't like the look of them, and changed my course to avoid both. When we passed them, I discovered that the two bergs were connected under the surface of the sea! These dangerous icebergs undoubtedly sank a great many of the ships that were lost off the Horn, for in night-sailing, skippers took tremendous chances with them.

Probably the last sailing-ship to be sent to a watery grave by them was the *Kobenhavn*, which vanished two years ago between Buenos Aires and Australia. She was a Danish cadet ship, and carried, at the time of her disappearance, a crew of seventy young naval students. The steamer *Junee* of Sydney, Australia, captained by F. D. Fletcher, a veteran navigator of the Southern Ocean, traversed the sea lanes and the uncharted areas of the vast wastes in a search for the Danish ship, but after covering more than twelve thousand miles she gave up the search, and her skipper expressed the opinion that the missing ship had struck an iceberg suddenly in the dark, going down so quickly that there was not even time to send out distress messages. Beyond a doubt that was how the tragedy occurred, for nothing sinks a ship so quickly as collision with an iceberg. The *Titanic*, it will be recalled, was advertised as "an unsinkable ship," but she never completed her first voyage. In a perfectly smooth sea she struck an iceberg, and it ripped open nearly every compartment along one side. There is no such thing as an "unsinkable ship." There never will be so long as icebergs drift across our oceans.

Transatlantic tourists get a mild thrill out of watching

ships' officers taking water temperatures; these tourists hug the delusion that the temperature of the sea-water will indicate the proximity of an iceberg. I use the word *delusion* deliberately, for I do not believe that ocean water temperatures have any practical bearing on the position of an iceberg. I have taken sea-water temperatures quite close to big icebergs, and these temperatures were no lower than those taken in the ocean farther out from the berg. In fact, they were sometimes slightly higher. Any schoolboy can see why that would be. The heavy cold water immediately surrounding an iceberg sinks, and warm water flows in to take its place.

Another common delusion about icebergs is the belief that their sea-depths are always six times greater than their height above the sea-level—that if they reach a height of two hundred feet above the sea-level, for instance, they attain a depth of twelve hundred feet. This is certainly not true. The ratio is a matter, not of depth, but of weight. A pinnacled iceberg rising two hundred

feet above the sea would be the sea level of the sea, because its base might be three times as broad as its upper part. I saw this demonstrated once, off the coast of Newfoundland. A big iceberg floated down from the Arctic. It had a pinnacle several hundred feet high. The newspapers, basing their estimates on the old theory about iceberg depths, said that berg was nearly one thousand feet deep. I know that it wasn't, by many hundreds of feet, because it floated across banks that were not two hundred feet deep.

I BUCKED the Horn westerlies for a week, but finally got around the Horn without damage to my ship and stood north into the trades, passing the Island of Juan Fernandez (where Robinson Crusoe lived) and swinging up to the equator. It is pleasant sailing, coming up from the Horn. Each day that passes brings the ship into warmer waters; the winds are steady, and the hands have very little to do. I've seen the sails and yards go untouched for days at a stretch. There is, under such favoring winds, no night work to be done, so the regular watches sleep on the hatches in the warm air. The lookout and the wheelman alone are active.

It is indeed a pleasant experience, coming up in the trades with a good ship manned by a good crew. The hands wash out and dry their moldy clothes, and in the fo'c'sle head, singing, or spinning yarns. I suppose it is hardly necessary for me to say that there is a dog-watch from four o'clock till six in the afternoon, and another from six o'clock in the evening till eight. These two-hour watches serve to break up the regular four-hour watches, so that the hands get their turns at the various watches. Without these dog-watches, for instance, the "graveyard watch," or to give it its proper name, the middle watch, which lasts from midnight till four o'clock in the morning, would fall to the lot of the same men each night. We had four months out from port, and we celebrated Christmas Day under tropical skies. I remember that Yuletide celebration very vividly, for it brought me face to face with a unique and alarming situation. To mark the festive day, I gave the crew a small ration of rum, leaving the matter of its distribution to the second mate and the men themselves. The second mate was, I am sorry to say, a man of rather weak character, one of the sort who mixed sur-



reptitiously with the crew. He had lost their respect, for that always happens when a ship's officer mixes too freely with the hands on a long voyage. It turned out, when the rum ration came to be distributed, that several of the hands didn't drink rum. But the Irishmen did, and they got it all. An Irish sailor full of rum is not usually a tractable man, and those sea-lawyers in my ship began to look for trouble as soon as the liquor took effect.

My sea-lawyers were soon mouthing about the superiority of the Irish race, and the degeneracy of all others. They were particularly insulting toward the Italian and Spanish members of the crew, and a fight started. An Italian drew a knife, and sank it in the neck of one of the Irishmen. Fortunately, the knife missed the man's jugular, but there was blood enough, and the bold Irishman lost all his fighting spirit. Yelling like a madman, he raced out of the fo'c'sle, and with half the crew at his heels, ran aft toward my cabin.

I saw them coming, and I thought it was mutiny. The rush aft was so headlong, and so noisy, that nothing but a sudden outbreak of mutiny seemed to explain it. I grabbed a rifle, and met the gang at my cabin door. Of course I saw immediately that I wasn't dealing with anything so serious as mutiny, so I gave the mate and the men a tongue-lashing that sent them for'ard feeling a good deal more sober than when they rushed aft, and then I dressed the man's neck. After that the sea-lawyers left the Spaniards and Italians alone.

I made a bad mistake when I shipped that mate, but he would have fooled anybody, I think. He was a fine big specimen, physically, had a nice way with him, and meant well; but he was never meant to wield authority, and he was rather stupid. I spent hours trying to make him understand the different kinds of time we had at sea, but he never understood it sufficiently to be relied upon in making observations. In those days we had three kinds of time to keep track of in a sailing-ship—nautical time, astronomical time and civil time. The nautical time was based on a day lasting from noon to noon, but it was dated on the civil day it ended on. The astronomical time was also based on a day lasting from noon to noon, but it bore the date of the day on which it began. Civil time extended from midnight of one day till midnight of the next. It is now universal, of course; but when the three times had to be considered in a ship, the system could be much more confusing than daylight saving to a dull or inexperienced sailor. The advantage of nautical time lay in the fact that it allowed the skipper to get the longitude in the forenoon and the latitude at noon, so that he had the ship's position at noon, instead of at midnight. The nautical time created a twelve-hour day or a thirty-six-hour day for a ship's crew at the end or at the beginning of each voyage, for the ship had to be squared with the time on land. The astronomical time was used for making calculations, and it can easily be understood how confusing they could be to an amateur navigator, particularly if his ship had been at sea for weeks, or even months.

I don't hold it against my mate that he didn't understand the different times, but his stupidity came home to me in a startling manner when, on that swing up from the Horn, just as we were approaching the equator, he came to me and reported that the fresh-water tanks were empty. I could have knocked the blockhead down, for

it was his duty to ration out the fresh water; and sure enough, he'd squandered it till there wasn't enough left to wash a shirt with. And there we were, on the equator, a month away from the nearest port, without water to drink. It gave me a bit of a shock, but after telling the mate what I thought of him, I went back to my cabin and thought out a solution of the problem.

This is what I did. I got a ten-gallon iron boiler, inserted a tube into the cover of it, and boiled sea-water in the receptacle. The tube in the cover led into a tin of water. As the steam formed, it passed through the tube and condensed in the tin of water. It was hard work, and hot work, periodically baling out the saturated solution, refilling the boiler with sea-water, and getting it to the boiling-point again, but we got fifteen gallons of distilled fresh water every day by the process, and that was sufficient to give us drinking-water. We used the process for ten days, and at the end of that period a rain came, which refilled our tanks. I have often heard of ship's crews dying of thirst at sea, because their water-tanks became empty in tropical waters, but in these cases, if they were really true, the skippers concerned were not very resourceful; for it is always possible, in a wooden ship, to condense fresh water out of sea-water by the primitive method I have described; and it is surprising how much fresh water one can get from sea-water in a day by condensing all the steam from an ordinary kettle.

By the time we had solved our water problem we were getting into cooler climes, and in due course we came into the latitude of San Francisco, where rougher weather is generally encountered. We stayed well out from the California coast, because the wind is likely to come from the N. W., which means that it would be dead ahead for the windjammer that was hugging the coast too closely. The ancient navigators must have had trying times beating up this coast. I have a map that was made in 1651, "drawne according to ye truest Descriptions lateſt Dif-
coeries & beſt Obſeruations made by English or Strangers," and it would amuse and interest the modern navigator, although in a general way it is astonishingly accurate. On it, California is shown as an island, and the Pacific coast of what is now the United States runs out northwest towards China. This map plainly shows

the port of "Sir Francifco Draco," and it is a real port, not a little cove. This does away completely with the popular belief that San Francisco was named in honor of the Franciscan monks. It was named by the great English navigator himself, and no grander name could be linked with the beautiful port.

A few days more on the Pacific, and we sighted Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River. In my day this channel was known as "The Graveyard of the Pacific," and it deserved its sinister name, for its sandy bars clutched many a fine ship. Like

Sable Island, which is known as "The Graveyard of the Atlantic," and around the far-flung sandy tentacles of which more than two hundred wrecks have been marked by the Marine Department of Canada, the bars of the Columbia River mouth seldom released a ship that touched them. The sweep of the ocean cut the quicksands from under the ship, and she buried herself in a very few hours. However, we managed to slip past this trap in the daylight, and came safely to our anchorage. We had been at sea for more than a year.



Free Lances in Diplomacy

"The Red Raid" deals with a daring communist attempt to put the Free Lances out of business—and with their dramatic reprisal.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by Arthur Lytle

IN a small but luxuriously furnished London house out Kensington way a strikingly handsome woman—who owed her youthful appearance to a famous specialist in Vienna—walked slowly up and down a large room on the second floor with the noiseless, ceaseless tread of a leopardsess in a cage. Occasionally she glanced out of the front window. Presently, when she saw a man strolling up on the opposite side of the street, she smiled rather contemptuously. She had noticed him once before—had watched him from behind her curtains until he entered a house farther up the block. She doubted that he lived there; when a woman has aroused police interest in all of the larger Continental cities, she gets suspicious about men she sees too frequently. This presumable neighbor had none of the Foreign Office earmarks—so she assumed that he was either a Scotland Yard man or else a *bona-fide* resident on that block. Her suspicions were strongly in the direction of the C.I.D.—which did not trouble her in the least, because she was fairly certain that none of the Government people had the slightest evidence against her.

At the rear of the house was a garden, and a mews—entered through an alley from a side street. Where there had been a score of horses in private stables thirty years before, there were now but four park cobs, and a dozen cars, including three taxis owned by their drivers.

A humble, rather battered car now came up the alley, dropped a fare in the mews, and drove on out through the other end on a second street. The man, whose clothes were decent enough but whose head was bound in gauze bandages, opened the Countess' gate in the brick wall, closed it securely, crossed the garden, and entered the service-hall. He went up to the second floor without happening to meet any of the servants, and knocked at the door of the large front room. As he entered, the Countess was lounging comfortably in a tilting swivel-chair at her desk in one corner.

"Mais qu'— You attend some entertainment, Dimitri? Oui?"

"It was supposed to be a mass-meeting—last night, in the East End. But apparently the wrong kind of 'mass'—that's all! I cannot understand these English. They claim to be of the Workers' party—affiliated with the Third Internationale—yet they will not listen to us when we say we are ready to assist by blow' up the factories—kill all the capitalists! They say that if we blow up factories, where can they work? If we kill the capitalists, who iss to pay wages—or anything at all? We tell them they mus' seize all the manufacturing works they need for themselves, an' produce coöperatively. They say they has seen coöperative production work in Russia an' it iss not good enough. They want pianos—wireless—motorcars or bikes—electric light and steam heat in winter—and say that even with low wages from capitalists

they get those here, and will not change until they see something better. Mind you, Countess—it iss but half of them say that, but they haf most influence. And when some of us jump on the platform to demand 'direct action,' they strike with the fist or the club. It is not conclusive—it iss brutal, but one recovers. The knife or pistol iss far more effective. We slip knife into a dozen or more when nobody sees—there will be no more trouble from them! You spread much propaganda—it will show effect soon. And you get valuable information. Anything new?"

"Yes—confirmation of certain suspicions. But I'm in doubt as to your coming here again for some weeks—or any of the others. Government men appear to be watching me—soon they'll watch the alley and the mews, and discover I have respectable visitors calling in front and less respectable ones at the rear. You see, I am supposed to be a Hungarian widow belonging to the aristocracy—nothing to do with people of your sort. The moment I am really suspected, it will hamper me badly. However, I think I may take you down into Devon again very soon. I am convinced there is something big down there which I can't get at by ordinary means. Here! Look at these!"—pulling a number of cable and wireless messages from a pigeon-hole in her desk. "From Horta in the Azores, Maryland, New York, San Francisco, Hongkong, Singapore, Port Said and Marseilles. From our agents, in answer to cables I send out to them. You recall, of course, the dull-silver plane we chased down to the Bay of Biscay from Devon? I supposed my plane the faster of the two because I was using heavy oil with Diesels. It was in my mind to send out an S.O.S.; then it occurred to me that if Viscount Salcombe was in that plane he would claim that he was not standing watch with his wireless at the time, and so missed it altogether. That man is no fool! . . . He certainly wouldn't bring his plane down on the water, where we could riddle him with the machine-gun we had and then take his bus where we pleased for examination. You'll remember that we suddenly noticed he was farther away from us—and opened our throttles wide. Still he walked away from us, and changed his course, heading for Gib. We cut across the canal-level of France and around Spain, hoping to intercept him, but had our trouble for nothing—he had simply faded out of sight and must have been going better than two hundred when he did it! Some streak of intuition made me send a wireless to our Portuguese agent in Horta, on Fayal. He replies that on the date mentioned a dull-silver plane came over the new flying-field on Pico,—across the little strait,—exchanged a code-message with the wireless station—and flew westward without coming down at all! I cabled Bermuda—but they saw nothing. New York reported that such a plane had flown over

Roosevelt Field at the time specified, without coming down, and had gone on westward. From San Francisco and all these other ports, I get the same story for the dates I mentioned: a dull-silver plane, passing without stopping, and exchanging code-messages with the wireless stations. On the morning of the sixth day, a plane of that description came down at Trevor Hall. Now this is all the corroborative evidence I need that the plane we chased that day has a speed over two hundred miles, and motors burning some kind of fuel that carried it twenty-one thousand miles without a fresh supply. Briefly—there are now at Trevor Hall and in the Royal Flying Corps planes which simply laugh at any owned by other governments—if my deductions and information are correct. Well—we must have all the secrets connected with those planes, together with a lot of other information as to what they have down there in Devon—and we must have them at once!"

"Yess—of course! But how to do? That iss not so easy! For twenty years Earl Trevor—now Marquess of Lyonesse, Earl Lammerford, Prince Abdool Mohammed Khan, and one or two others have been suspected of dabbling in underground politics, thwarting many *coupés* very carefully planned. They haf been captured—tortured upon one occasion, many year' ago—but the suspicsons nefer haf been verified—there has been no bit of sure proof. Political agents most sure of what they think they know have had to admit being mistaken. Much of what you say, Countess, may be true—but I theenk it haf been overestimated. Anyhow—you cannot get into the Trevor Hall estate. Ground recently purchased and added to it on the north and west has more than doubled the size of the property—one of the county turnpikes now runs through the center of it, but enclosed by eighteen-foot concrete walls protected by high-tension current along the top—similar walls surrounding the entire estate excepting along the edge of Scabbacombe Cliffs. Owing to experiments conducted there for the Admiralty, the place has the status of a Naval station—flies the white ensign—and is legally authorized to shoot and kill anyone attempting to get inside. That iss what you are up against when you think of prying into the secrets of the place. So!"

"Don't forget, Dimitri, that there are several other methods besides trying to force an entrance into that place. You remember the girl who wouldn't get into my car to run into Dartmouth with us—the one you chased over the wall, and who almost smashed your head with a stone? You still owe her something, I think. That

girl is at least the constant companion of Viscount Salcombe, if not something more than that to him. If we can get her in our power and take her somewhere on the Continent in my plane—we can make that smart young man tell us a good deal more than if only he himself was to be considered. And he's the Marquess' only son—up to his neck in every experiment they try out. Another is Viscount Aylesworth, the clever metallurgist who married the Marquess' only daughter and lives in Earl Lammerford's castle on the Cornish cliffs near St. Ives—a thoroughly isolated spot with not a very large force of retainers to protect it. Also, there is a child of nearly three years—the Marquess' only grandson. It seems to me that child or his mother—or both—would be excellent levers for the extraction of information such as we require. Eh?"

"Nom d'un nom! We all admit your intelligence and cleverness in such matters, Countess. Odd that all of us should have concentrated upon the principals without considering the persons they are fondest of. Suppose, in a few days—when I get these bandages off—I please myself with a walking-trip through Cornwall and South Devon I see the lay of the proposition—I observe—I sit in parlors and taprooms of inns and listen to what is said by the inhabitants. Yess?"

"I think I approve of that. But first, a little visit in South Devon. My friends the Benjamins, where we were before, are leaving for a two months' trip on the Continent.

I shall write them that their estate is ideal for aviation experiments, and that I would like to spend a month there with two of my flying friends and their wives. I offer to take their place for two months at a rental which must be attractive to them. Or in one hour, I can get through on the telephone and see how this strikes them. As you may remember, their land adjoins that of Earl Falknayss at the rear—it should be not too difficult to catch his young daughter all alone some day and keep her locked up until we can take her away in the plane, at night."

A week later, the Honorable Jean Wallington started out of the house one morning with his

big police-dog Brutus, for a walk through the woods on the Falknayss estate. Their neighbors, the Stranleigh-Benjamins, had left the day before for a

two-months' absence on the Continent—and it was under stood in the neighborhood that a friend of the family had leased the place until their return. Who this might happen to be, Jean didn't know—but naturally assumed that some of the London or county people wanted to be of the hot town in the summer. When Lord Ivo had tioned her, a month before, against accepting any invitation whatever from a stranger, she had supposed him to be joking in a rather possessive way—and having a s



When she had finished, he held her tightly for a moment.

personality of her own, had told him to "pipe down." But he soon convinced her that he was in earnest, explaining why. After that, she had one narrow escape from trouble—a close enough one to suggest carrying about, concealed on her, a small but deadly automatic and half a dozen little implements which might prove valuable in an emergency. Women's clothes in these days are a bit scanty for the concealment of such objects—but Jean rigged up a very thin leather harness which held the articles under her dress, where she could get at them in a hurry and where nobody would attempt to search for them.

Presently she noticed that Brutus did not act as usual. Instead of ranging through the underbrush after rabbits, he kept close against her legs as she walked, occasionally looking up into her face with a low whimper. And when they were in the depths of the woods, he sagged down and rolled over on his side with moans of pain. He tried to drag himself along with his forepaws—tried to stagger up on his feet again. Then, though Jean could see that he was suffering intensely, he stiffened with a hoarse growl of rage and turned toward some of the thicker underbrush. A moment later three men, whom at first she supposed to be gamekeepers or poachers, stepped out into the little clearing.

One of these men Jean recognized as a foreigner she had seen somewhere, but couldn't place. All three were apparently men of some education, and they spoke courteously, so that it took her a full moment to grasp the force of what they said.

"Sorry about the dog, Miss Wallington—but we had to render him harmless just before you started out, or he would have raised a row which might have brought people out from the house—"

"You mean—that you poisoned poor Brutus! Oh, you contemptible, cowardly scoundrels! *Oh—*"

She knelt down and petted the dying animal, who whimpered once—looked up into her face with love in his soft brown eyes—then fell back, motionless. She was thinking furiously. The three husky brutes were surrounding her. If she managed to get her gun out, there was no possible chance for her killing more than one of them before the others grabbed her. Later on, the gun and other small articles might be used with much greater effect—provided they had no suspicion of her having them. Her voice was cold as she spoke—she had herself perfectly in hand.

"Let me impress one thing upon your minds before we go into other matters! Sooner or later—unless you kill me first—I will make you pay for this brutal thing, until you'll wish you were dead! That's a promise. . . . Well—get on with it! What's the next move?"

The brutes laughed.

"Why—nothing difficult or really unpleasant, Miss Wallington. We'll take your word to come with us quietly. It would be almost impossible for anyone at the house to hear you if you screamed—but of course we'd immediately stuff a handkerchief into your pretty mouth. You can save yourself that by coming along quietly."

"I see! Coming along where? Are you the lot who have leased the Stranleigh-Benjamin place?"

"A lady who is under pretty heavy obligations to us took the lease and invited us down—knowing nothing of what we had in mind—"

"What a liar you are—and how little intelligence you must suppose I have! The only woman who knows the Benjamins and could possibly be associated with scum like you is that Hungarian adventuress who calls herself countess Bozanyi—who was visiting here a month ago and did a good bit of flying—was doubtless has her bus here

"Very well—I know about what to expect. Come



along—the short-cut is by way of the Benjamins' little summerhouse at their edge of the woods."

Her tongue-lashing hadn't failed to get under their skins—particularly that of Dimitri, whose last name she never heard at any time but whom she judged correctly as the actual poisoner of Brutus. They were, however, forced to admire her nerve and acceptance of a situation she couldn't cope with. When the big manor-house was reached she was taken in by a small side door when nobody appeared to be about—and up to a room on the top floor which evidently had been hastily prepared to hold her until she was removed elsewhere. The single dormer window was barred with iron rods an inch thick. The door was a massive affair of Tudor oak, fitting snugly into its casing, and had a heavy lock with a tongue which projected two inches into the jamb-slot. An attempt had been made to screw a couple of heavy bolts upon the outside of the door—but the oak was too well seasoned for wood-screws unless holes had been drilled for them, and the massive lock seemed quite sufficient to prevent anyone from getting out.

When they left the girl there, after promising that something in the way of food would be sent up in an hour or so, Jean made a careful examination of the door and window—then sat down in a comfortable chair to figure out what such a collection of secret agents was most likely to do with her. She knew she could get through that barred window with not more than two hours' work—and



"If I thought one of you had any object in aiding that girl to escape, I'd shoot him as I would a dog!"

the door inside of ten minutes if nobody was on guard outside. As the day was clear and a full moon would be up by ten o'clock, she knew the Countess could take off easily with her plane from the level field she had used before, and be across the Channel by morning. They must get her out of England as soon as possible to be safe from the thorough search which most certainly would be made when her disappearance was discovered. So it looked as though she wasn't likely to be visited by anyone except the person bringing her food until the moon came up in the evening and all their preparations to fly had been made. As daylight lasts rather late during an English summer evening, she would be cutting her leeway of time pretty short if she waited until dark before making a move—probably, after fetching up her lunch, they would not disturb her until tea or dinner. After making somewhat of a meal from thin bread-slices, scones and cakes—carefully avoiding the tea, potted ham and marmalade, which she figured were probably drugged—she decided to see what might be done. When the men came up with the tray, she was standing where she got a side-glimpse of the hall, and when they went out, she got a glimpse in the other direction. There were no chairs in sight—therefore, probably, no guard in the hall.

After an hour's wait, she took from the harness under her dress a piece of tough steel, narrow enough to turn in the lock, and with an upturned end of over an inch. At the other end was a disk which she clamped with a

small pair of steel pliers—one gets a good deal of leverage by using pliers to turn an obstinate key. After gently feeling around inside the lock with the bent steel, she soon located the ward-slots—and began gently turning. As she supposed, the lock had been thoroughly oiled. When the tongue slid smoothly and silently back, she opened the door a crack and looked out. Nobody was in sight or apparently anywhere near that part of the big house. Her captors evidently were confident that she was lying in a drugged sleep by this time. She assumed that the Benjamin servants must have been given temporary leave.

After investigating that entire floor, she located two narrow stairways at the other end which she knew from previous acquaintance with the lower floors must go down to the service part of the house. With this line of retreat in reserve, she went back and very carefully locked the door of her room from the outside—which, later, so completely puzzled her captors that it made her final escape much easier.

Jean was sorely tempted to hide herself about the house and see if she couldn't pick up information as to her captors' further plans—but she recalled the Marquess' very serious warning to her after she had done that a month before. In this case, she was not a free agent. So she went silently down the service-stairs to a rear door from which, watching her chance, she dashed to a thick hedge separating the grounds around the house from the field where the Countess' plane was parked. Squeezing through a gap in this, she ran swiftly along the other side until she reached the woods—then, by paths she had known from childhood, she hurried through to the Falknnyss side and into their own house, where she found the Earl in his study.

She gave him a detailed account of what had been done to her—and asked that he have the chief constable down at once to arrest the outfit in the Benjamin house. The story hit one of Lord Falknnyss' most violent prejudices—the abduction of his daughter and the poisoning of a prize dog on his own grounds. The whole county was hot with it before morning. Meanwhile—the Honorable Jean, in flying-helmet and goggles by way of disguise—was driving her car madly along the road to the gates of Trevor Hall. There she lost no time in hunting up Viscount Salcombe in his underground machine-shop, where he had just successfully finished a delicate experiment. He sat companionably with her on the edge of the long work-bench while he lighted his pipe and listened to the story.

For a moment, when she had finished, he hugged her tightly—but the frown deepened between his eyes.

"Jean—before very long, one or both of us is going to commit deliberate murder! It's all very well for that type of vermin to claim that they are waging warfare against the entire capitalistic class and are excusable for

war methods in doing it—but that is simply rot! If I catch the Countess Bozanji up in the air I'm going to crash her if I can. With that high-frequency ray we tried out against those planes outside of Moscow, I can put her motors out of business in the air at any time! Do you know, I've had a hunch these last few days that some disaster was approaching—an' I'm by no means sure that this outrage upon you is the end of it. In spite of all our Government protestations, the Muscovites claim that they have no power to curtail the activities of the Third International. It seems to me we are approaching a flare-up of some kind. We're not going to stand this incessant Communist propaganda in the United Kingdom and the dumping of convict goods upon our markets—it has shut down dozens of our factories already. Well, Moscow isn't going to declare war, openly, against any nation—they aren't quite such fools just at present. But they'll use murder under the surface to accomplish what they're after—an' I'm wondering if they aren't ready to attempt something extreme. Of course it's not going to do them the least good—just more nails in the coffin of Communism—but a lot of mighty decent people are going to be hurt just the same. Somehow I'm uneasy about Byl, an' Jimmy—an' 'Lammy'—over there in Cornwall. They're in a pretty isolated spot as far as prompt assistance goes. The castle is fairly well protected against any probable sort of attack—but nothing like as well as our digs, here. Jimmy's mine is protected by a thick concrete inclosure, with two batteries of the Royal Artillery, usin' it as a field-battery experimental station. Two batteries, however, isn't so much of a force at close quarters."

JEAN'S escape had been discovered when they took up her tea at four o'clock. The moment the men saw she wasn't in the room, apparently, they sent down for the Countess—unlocked the door in her presence to show just how they had found it—then asked where she thought the girl could be.

For a moment the Countess gave way to an outburst of fury. Leveling an automatic at her crestfallen fellow-conspirators, she said vehemently:

"If I thought any one of you had the slightest object in aiding that girl to escape, I'd shoot him as I would a dog! You've certainly botched this affair irremediably. . . . But no use blackguarding each other about this—she's gone! Evidently that infant is far more clever than we had any reason to suppose—she figured out just what part of the food was likely to be drugged and avoided it. The one thing certain is that she'll make trouble about this at once! She didn't see me at all, has no proof of any connection with the rest of you—so I shall remain here. It's the best base for airplane work I could find in the county. But you others will have to be away from here at once—clear away! I'd suggest your running over to Penzance as tourists—so that you'll be available for whatever we do at Lammerford Castle. I'll phone those I left waiting in Exeter to come down here—as servants—supposed to run this place while I stay."

So it came about that when the chief constable for South Devon came to the Benjamin estate with Earl Falkniss,—himself a magistrate,—they were received by a remarkably handsome woman who said she had just returned from procuring a house-staff in Exeter and knew nothing whatever of what might have been going on in her absence. The Honorable Jean had explained the status of the Countess as a Muscovite secret agent, but had to admit that she hadn't seen her while a prisoner in the house and had no proof beyond a conversation overheard near the summerhouse a month before. There was no trace of her captors anywhere—nothing the county police could get hold of—

but they warned the woman that she and the house would be kept under observation indefinitely. . . .

At the end of the week, Wilkins, the major-domo at Lammerford Castle, came to Viscount Aylesworth,—who lived on the upper floors of the south wing with his family,—to confer with him in the Earl's absence about certain matters down in the little fishing-town of St. Ives six miles away.

"It's this way, m'Lud. I'd not trouble you with ord'n'ry matters—but, as you know, the Earl is most particular about anything of unusual appearance in this neighborhood being reported to him at once. I fancy it's because, with his very wide commercial int'rests an' political associations, there would be here an' there some person rather ill-disposed against him, an' he prefers not bein' taken unawares, as it were. Havin' you an' Her Ladyship an' the young master livin' here would be another reason, he told me, for knowin' whatever may be goin' on. Well—it'll be this way, sir, d'y'e see. One of my under-gardners—a steady young chap who is walkin' out with one of the town girls—likes to 'ave 'is glass an' bit of something to eat, occasionally, at the Tregenna Castle. Now there'll be tourist people about the village almost any day except in midwinter, so one pays little attention to 'em—but for several days three foreigners who are stoppin' at the Porthminster, near the station, 'ave been askin' a lot of questions about all the old castles in the neighborhood, especially this place—the nearest road to it, and whether it is open to visitors. They've been told that some of the family are almost always in residence an' that no visitors are received at any time of the year, an' they've been passin' remarks about it—sayin' it's known that there are wonderful Norman an' Tudor carvings an' windows in the castle an' there must be some way of gettin' permission to see them. Broderick told 'em they could save their breath an' time. It was 'is opinion, m'Lud, that the three of 'em were up to no good—so he came to me at once for instructions."

"What did you tell him, Wilkins?"

"I said the castle would appreciate it, sir, if the townsfolk would keep an eye upon 'em, or on any other suspicious persons in the neighborhood. There was another thing Broderick mentioned, sir. 'E was out on the moor east of here, an' noticed a place where the gorse an' heather 'ad been crushed down as if heavy tires 'ad passed over 'em. 'E showed the spot to our lads at our take-off runway an' hangars, yon—they said a heavy French plane had come down an' landed there recently, but couldn't recall havin' heard it any night or seen it in the daytime. I fancy they get a bit slack at night when none of our own planes is expected."

Viscount Aylesworth's expression was thoughtful, as he said slowly:

"Hmph! . . . I don't altogether like this! Though, come to think of it, it's a lot better to be forewarned of outside attention being directed this way. Otherwise, we might be caught napping. Well, I don't need to caution you, Wilkins, about havin' the household staff keep an eye out for strangers prowlin' about the neighborhood."

UPON the following Tuesday morning Lady Sibyl, Viscountess Aylesworth, went out to the enclosed gardens adjoining the south wing, to read in the rustic stone pavilion on the edge of the cliff while the three-year-old Honorable Francis George James Aylesworth and his inseparable playmate—a large black cat, "Peter," of the royal castle lineage—busied themselves with important affairs in which a large rubber ball was used according to their own ideas. Sarah Cummings, the boy's nurse, sat stitching a bit of lingerie in the pavilion with his mother. The



He closed one of the Muscovite's eyes hammered him until the final knockout was an actual relief.

Honorable Francis and Pete had many surreptitious activities which they supposed were unknown to the family. One of these was an occasional excursion to the outside moors through a thin spot in the almost impenetrable box-hedge surrounding the big garden. There was also a ditch to be negotiated. But the youngster managed this without too much difficulty, while his companion took it in a couple of powerful leaps. Once out among the gorse bushes they struck places where the boy's head frequently disappeared from view. Left to himself, he might have become lost—but Pete invariably led him back to the thin spot in the hedge.

Upon this occasion, they hadn't gone far when they came upon a smiling man sitting among the bushes and smoking a cigarette. He nodded pleasantly—asked a few questions about the castle—and offered the boy some toffee, which Francis barely had the strength to refuse on the ground that he had given "muver" his "pawole" not to eat sweets until they were offered to him after dinner. Then the man—foiled on the drugged-toffee proposition—suggested that they walk on a bit farther and talk with a man who had apparently stopped his motorcar to look at the magnificent view. But here again, it seemed that the Honorable Francis had given his "pawole" that he would not go anywhere with strangers. Upon this the man picked him up and started running for the car, his hand over the struggling boy's mouth.

Pete's fur had risen from the moment they met the stranger. Pete was a gentleman—but somehow he just didn't like that man, and the moment the fellow grabbed up the boy and started to run, a clawing, spitting mass of jet-black fur soared through the air and landed on the man's shoulders. Big black paws with the claws out, reached around and ripped the skin of his face to shreds, badly injuring one eye. Seizing one of the black forelegs, as he was forced to drop the boy, the man tore the cat loose with such brutal force that he snapped the bones of the

animal's leg as he hurled the cat away. With the castle tower in sight, the boy ran for it as fast as his chubby legs could go. Seeing this, the second man jumped from the car and came running to head him off. The Honorable Francis was being most carefully trained not to call out or cry when he was hurt—but as he approached the hedge he cried loudly in desperation, "*Muv-ver!* . . . *Muv-ver!*"

It was more instinct than actual hearing, possibly—but the two women in the pavilion dropped what they were doing and were out of it like a shot, running toward that low thin spot in the hedge which they knew all about. Confident that the boy wouldn't go far and that Pete would be sure to fetch him back, they hadn't interfered before.

Lady Sibyl was first through the hedge. As she came out of the ditch, the boy was within a hundred feet of her with poor Pete loping along on three legs behind him, and the running man possibly fifty feet away. Producing an automatic from somewhere, the Viscountess sent a bullet past the man's ear, and when he reached for a weapon, she smashed his wrist. The other scoundrel was busy mopping his bleeding face and hands. Carefully estimating the distance, she raised the muzzle of the pistol to give the bullet a higher trajectory, and fired. In two seconds, the brute's hat spun off his head and landed on the ground several feet away. As both of them knew she must have four shots left in her magazine, each of which meant sudden death if she so willed it, they ran for their car and drove away over the moor as fast as it would go.

In round-eyed excitement, the boy stumbledly told his mother and Sarah what had happened. His mother tenderly picked up the suffering cat and carried him back to the castle, where Lord Aylesworth set Pete's leg in plaster splints while hearing the boy's adventure. Then he telephoned for the best surgeon in St. Ives to run out and look the job over as soon as possible; after which his wife took the phone—which had one private connection with Trevor Hall in South Devon and another with the Trevors

mansion in Park Lane—asking her brother to fetch over Dr. Gordon Smith, one of the biggest elementary chemists in Europe, within the hour if possible, for a conference; and when Salcombe and Dr. Smith, accompanied by the Honorable Jean Wallington came down in one of the Trevor planes, a consultation took place in the library.

LORD IVO presently got down to the meat of the thing: "Fancy we've all got the wind up a bit! What's your idea, Byl?"

"Taking Jean's experience with ours, it looks to me like a campaign against the Trevor family and everyone associated with them. Of course that has happened before to a limited degree—and then dropped off from absence of proof that we're mixing in politics to any extent. Just at present, I think that Trevor Hall is being credited with inventions and developments which put England where no other nation can safely attack her—and this seems to be a determined effort to alter that condition."

"As a starter, I fancy you're quite right, Byl—we'll have to go into the matter a bit. But I've a vague sort of hunch that something worse than that is likely to happen any day. The Finns aren't bein' fooled by any sense of fancied security—not for a second! They're buildin' gas-proof rooms in their houses—gasproof underground chambers—gasproof wards in the hospitals. In every European capital, I fancy, there's a growin' dread of annihilation by lethal gas—which of course is sheer moonshine, but you can't make the people believe that."

"You say the gas-bogy is moonshine, Ivo. What's the defense?"

"Gas-masks ready for instant use is the most obvious one—as a preliminary measure—"

"You'll notice that everyone in this castle is now carrying one about—I gave that order an hour ago. As a starter, that measure is all right—for those who can obtain or buy one. But how about those who won't or can't?"

"Scatter for open country—no enemy will bomb individuals or small groups with lethal gas over wide-open spaces, because he simply hasn't gas enough or money enough to do it. The center of Hyde Park, Battersea Park, Regent's Park, Victoria Park, Hampstead Heath or Black Heath would be reasonably safe in any bombing-attack because the plane would go after the congested streets and Governm't buildings, an' not waste gas on the open spaces. The tops of high buildings would be much less deadly than the street levels. Any wind strong enough to blow the gas away is a protection. Motor-trucks running through the streets like fire-engines, with six-foot fans blowing ahead of them would clear any street from most of the gas."

"How about that reported deadly gas, so powerful that a teaspoonful of the producing powder would kill everybody in London?"

"Metropolitan London has an area of seven hundred square miles. Figure a teaspoonful of anything known to man bein' sufficiently expansive to do any damage over such an area! Bally rot!"

"Is there any gas that will go through the best mask yet developed?"

"No chemist in France, England or the States knows of such a thing—an' the War Depart'mnts of all three are constantly tryin' to work out something of the sort."

"Well, that brings us pretty close to the problem I have in mind—which is a sort of blanket gas-mask which can be used in bulk over large areas. Doctor, you must know what chemicals are used as a filter in the gas-masks. Can they be produced in bulk?"

"Why not? Carbon in the form of powdered charcoal is one of them. Then there's a solution of sodium-thio-

sulphate. Other chemicals have been used—it's simple enough to get the most effective by experimentin'."

"Good—so far! Now then, Ivo! You and Tommy Dalton recently developed a mist-screen which hangs about fixed position for several hours,—or can be stratified at any level in the air,—and used it most successfully at Barrow and Spithead. Can the filter-chemicals of the best gas-masks be combined with your mist-screen so that a blanket of it laid down in the city streets would neutralize lethal gas?"

"Ah! . . . Now you're getting into something else again, Byl! It took me long weeks of experimentation to get that mist so that it would stick in one spot for hours without disappearing. It took Tommy other weeks to get the stuff so that it would stratify at any level. When we start in combinin' gas-filter chemicals with it, there'll be no tellin' what reactions we'll get. As a general proposition, I fancy it might be done—but even Gordon Smith, here, wouldn't guarantee it offhand, an' he's forgotten more than the rest of us know. However, I fancy you're quite right as to something of the sort bein' the greatest need of the moment. He and I will go back to the labs as soon as we've had a spot of tiffin, dig Tommy Dalton out of his hole, an' concentrate upon this proposition until we strike something. Then we'll wing over here an' let you see a try-out. While we're working on it, we'll send over a bus to patrol over the castle every night and send down any suspicious plane that comes bargin' around."

"Fine! But you can't work it out any too soon, Ivo!"

MERELY as a matter of precaution, Lord Aylesworth had Wilkins set four-hour watches with two of his men in the great hall—with orders to ring the bell in the Norman tower if they got the slightest whiff of anything like gas or heard any disturbance—but the night passed without anything happening, the patrolling plane evidently having a wholesome influence.

During that day and the following night, everything went on about the castle with no indication of anything unusual—but they couldn't get rid of the vague apprehension that the Reds were merely watching for their chance. In the afternoon, Lord Ivo, Gordon Smith, Dalton, and Jean came down out of the air—asked if a couple of St. Ives' fishermen were waiting for them in a motor-truck with a couple of large boxes—and had one of them taken some distance out on the moor.

"We didn't get precisely what we went after, Byl—but we struck something which may prove even better. Combinin' the filter-chemicals with Tommy's gravity ones worked perfectly. We didn't test out the higher strata, but the stuff lies thirty feet thick along the ground an' stays there for several hours. When we came to add my mist-screen stuff, we got a most amazin' reaction, an' supposed all our work had gone for nothing. All appearance of vapor or mist dissolved into transparent air so quickly that it looked like blotting it out. We'd been testing the stuff at the edge of the cliffs with masks on—an' partly in disgust, we chuck'd a thin container of lethal gas into it. The cloud of gas from the explosion instantly precipitated in a very fine whitish-yellow rain, a little of which remained upon the ground in what looked like lichen-patches. I took a bit of risk—chucked my mask an' walked over toward it, ready to back out at the first whiff. A very faint, rather aromatic odor in the air from the filter-stuff—but no gas. Now—in that largest box on the truck is a decrepit old dog. We're going to leave him out there on the moor with a bone to gnaw, an' drop an aerial torpedo near by. He won't suffer a full minute. We've got to know, ourselves—an' show you—just how deadly the gas is."

The test was over five minutes after their plane dropped the torpedo. The dog's resistance was probably low from his weakened condition—but as the gas drifted over him they could see him drop in about ten seconds. In thirty he was unquestionably dead. The fishermen shivered.

Then a crate containing six healthy sea-gulls was set down on the moor at some distance from the gassed spot. The truck was driven back to the spectators—and Lord Ivo's plane came silently diving down with a thin stream of feathery vapor spouting with compressed air from a nozzle under its fuselage. This dissolved as it touched the ground, leaving apparently nothing but pure open air around it. Then the plane returned to drop an aerial torpedo, with its curious "wibble-wibble" noise, so that it exploded a hundred feet from the crate. The cloud of expanding lethal gas could be seen spreading until it overwhelmed and blanketed the crate with the gulls in it. But as it got within fifty feet of the crate it began to thin out in a rain of fine yellow dust. Some of the gas thrown up a hundred feet by the explosion drifted on the light breeze for perhaps five hundred feet; then it was gone. The gulls had been frightened and were flying about in the crate squawking—yet they showed no sign of discomfort from gas. Two hours later, another torpedo was dropped—but apparently the filter-chemicals were as effective as before, for the gulls were still unharmed. The fishermen were given a hundred pounds each, and pledged to keep their mouths shut concerning what they had seen.

Lord Ivo said, as the party returned to the castle:

"Of course we can't tell yet as whether this neutralizing vapor is in any way injurious to human lungs or property—but as the chemicals in the cans of the gas-masks are not, I see no reason why they should be. After dinner, we'll spray the whole castle and grounds with enough of the stuff to penetrate every room—if you'll open all the windows, and close them an hour later. At midnight, we'll do it again—which should make you quite safe until well into tomorrow. We'll come back again every night for a week or so until those scoundrels try something—an' see what happens."

IT seemed as though the Muscovites had been closely watching the arrival and departure of planes from the castle—for about two in the morning three aerial torpedoes exploded, one after the other, close to the landward sides of the building. Broderick, who was on watch, had been told not to give an alarm unless he smelled enough gas to put on his mask—so none was given. The plane which bombed the place heard no sound and saw no lights flashing up; it flew back into Devon, its crew convinced they had converted the castle into a mausoleum.

But at ten o'clock a telephone message from their men in St. Ives reported that Viscount Aylesworth, with the Honorable Jean Wallington and the Chief Constable, had just driven in and stopped at the Tregenna Castle—also that several of the Lammerford servants had been in for the usual marketing that morning and had said nothing of any gas-bomb attack. The Muscovites couldn't understand this at all—for they had used a lethal gas which their chemists assured them was more deadly than any other in existence.

As the Viscount came walking down through the town with his two companions, Jean's eyes began to blaze—she said in a low voice to the Chief Constable:

"Major, one of those men talking with the fishermen on the beach is the brute who poisoned my dog and abducted me, last week! The one with the strips of surgical plaster on his face must be the brawler who tried to carry off Frankie. We've plenty of evidence to arrest and hold them—but I want you to do something for me first, will

you, please? Quietly call for three or four constables, here, and surround them so they can't get away—then leave that thick-set dark one to me for about ten minutes—will you?"

Major Robertson had been fairly boiling at the outrages committed in his county.

"On condition that you don't kill the brute, Miss Jean, it'll be a pleasure—though you'd best watch out! He's tough—an' slippery!"

AS there had been nothing to warn the scoundrels of what was coming, four constables unobtrusively joined the gossiping crowd around the boats drawn up on the beach and had taken positions next to them when Jean returned from a brief visit to a harness-shop with a braided-leather dog-whip five feet long.

The Major and Lord Aylesworth nodded—the constables suddenly closed in, grabbed the arms of the three scoundrels and removed several weapons from their clothes. Then Jean—who was well known, from her frequent visits to the village—spoke to the astonished fishermen:

"Men, last week, this fat brute poisoned my best dog, so that he died, suffering frightfully. Then he carried me off to a room in a house where I was locked in for several hours—and would have taken me out of England by plane if I hadn't managed to escape. Will you just shove him out here where I can get at him?"

Dimitri was violently pushed forward on the hard sand—and received a fearful slash across the face. He sprang for the girl—but before anyone could jump to her assistance she had caught his right arm in a peculiar ju-jitsu twist, recently taught her by the Marquess—and rendered it helpless. Again he sprang—and had his other arm put out of business. Then she began a systematic flogging, until the man finally dropped on the sand, shrieking with pain. As the girl tossed aside the whip there was a roar of approval from the crowd:

"Fair giv' 'im what-for—didn't she? An' 'e deserved more 'n' 'e got—so 'e did!"

Lord Aylesworth now stepped forward.

"I also have a little account to settle, men. This boulder with the plastered face is the one who tried to carry off my little lad—would have carried him off if it hadn't been for our blessed cat! He looks fairly well set-up—and he has stated here in the village that he is an expert boxer. Just strip his coat off an' shove him out here!"

They grinned delightedly and did it. This looked like a proper mill!

The Red thought himself much the better of the two, and came in with a rush—which Lord James sidestepped, planting a terrific blow on the side of the jawbone. The fellow staggered but didn't fall—and came rushing in again. Again the Viscount lightly sidestepped, and landed on his ribs with a force which left the fellow gasping. Well-built though anyone could see Aylesworth was, there was nothing to indicate the terrific force synchronized in his shoulder and arm muscles. Then he got down to systematic work. He closed one of the Muscovite's eyes after the other—smashed his nose—hammered him until the final knock-out was an actual relief.

Then Aylesworth put on his waistcoat and coat again.

"These three are undoubtedly some of the same lot who bombed the castle last night with enough lethal gas to kill everyone in it," he said. "But we are always well-protected against anything of that sort, so we paid no attention to it. If war should be declared at any time, you may feel entirely easy in mind—we'll protect this town as well. Meanwhile—we've enough evidence against these three rascals to send them down for several years—and I hope some of you men here may be on the jury!"

The Money Racket

By SEVEN ANDERTON

Illustrated by Joseph Maturo

TEED MORRIS, city editor of the *Argus*, glanced at the clock as he saw Sax Armstrong enter the news-room. It was thirteen minutes before nine o'clock. Armstrong, known in newspaper circles as "Old Hunch," strode directly to the editor's desk.

"Smarter, Hunch?" greeted Morris.

"Sick or walking in your sleep? You're thirteen minutes early instead of the usual half-hour late."

"I leave my breakfast half finished and rush in to do you a favor," grinned Armstrong, "and I'm welcomed with a dirty dig! That's gratitude!"

"Yeah," retorted Morris. "You owe me so many favors that you've got a devil of a crust to expect gratitude, when and if you do one for me."

"All right, Shylock," answered the reporter. "I just hustled in to let you know that you'd better keep plenty of help in the office for a little while. Murders or other sinister, violent and unlawful events are about to take place."

The editor leaned back in his chair and studied Armstrong through narrowed eyes. The reporter returned the gaze with impudent friendliness. These two veterans of the news-room understood one another.

"The old hunch working again, eh?" queried Morris.

"Maybe," nodded Armstrong. "But I have also been reading signs and portents and putting two and two together in my own inimitable way."

"By which you get nine for an answer?"

"The answer is," retorted the reporter, registering weary patience, "that things of the sort dear to the hearts of city editors are about to happen. Lawless and sensational activities are imminent. Extras will be printed suddenly, and poor overworked reporters will be further harassed by slave-driving—"

"Stop talking and say something," interrupted the editor. "What's up?"

"Pug Gatti and Lefty Leo Sartor are up," answered Armstrong. "Up at half-past eight in the morning and at breakfast in Henri's grill."

"And so the *Argus* will print an extra?" growled Morris. "Let—"

"Listen, Ted," said the reporter, suddenly serious. "I'm not fooling. When the town's leading exponent of the gentle arts of murder, blackmail, and arson forsakes his downy cot to have a nine-o'clock breakfast with his favorite boy friend at a very public table in an equally public grill, there is only one answer."

"Let's have it."

"Something," declared Armstrong, "is going to happen while our two prominent racketeers are at breakfast—something for which they expect to need an unbreakable alibi."

"I see," Morris nodded thoughtfully. "It's possible you're right."

"The praise," grinned Armstrong, "is faint but audible. I see you haven't dispatched all your slaves to their daily

When the gangsters undertook to extort tribute from the banks, they started something ending in war—by the author of "Manhattan Adventure."

tasks. Take my advice and keep a few around. It won't be long now."

Armstrong turned and crossed the room to his battered and littered desk. The editor sat staring thoughtfully at nothing. The assignment-book was open before him, but he decided to wait a bit before sending out the half-dozen reporters who remained in the office.

Sax Armstrong's tips, whether based on pure hunch or on what he referred to as the reading of signs and portents, had an uncanny way of panning out. Morris shrugged and turned his attention to some galley-proofs.

It was twenty minutes past nine o'clock when the telephone on his desk rang and Morris heard the voice of Haynes, "spot man" at police headquarters, on the wire. A gleam came into the editor's eyes as he listened and made a few notes on a pad. Then he snapped up the receiver and shot a glance toward the desk where Sax Armstrong sat.

"Hunch!" called Morris. "This looks like your yarn. Edgewood Community bank has just been blown up and robbed. Grab a car and get on it. Take Tarlow and a photographer with you, and let's have some action."

Armstrong and his aids had barely vanished through the news-room door when the telephone on Ted Morris' desk jangled again. Morris answered, to hear Haynes once more on the wire. The editor listened to the spot man's brief report and whirled back to his staff.

"Thomas!" he called. "Take Radison and a photographer and beat it for Baker Boulevard at Perry Road. The Baker Boulevard National bank has been blown up and robbed. Step on it!"

The big news-room had now grown tense with that tenseness which comes with the breaking of a big story and is the harbinger of travail from which an extra will be born.

"Two of them," muttered Morris, reaching for the phone. At ten o'clock newsboys were crying the extras, and the city was reading the details of the robbery and destruction of two suburban banks. Both institutions had been robbed according to apparently well-laid plans. Eight men had done the work in each case. At each bank four men, two carrying suitcases, had entered just a few moments after the doors opened for business. Two others had stood on the sidewalk as lookouts and two had remained at the wheels of cars in which the robbers were to escape. In both cases the employees had been taken by surprise and herded into a group to be guarded by two of the robbers while the other two quickly looted vault and tills of all gold, silver and paper currency. With their loot in a suitcase, the bandits forced their victims to march ahead of them from the bank. The victims were then warned that a suitcase full of dynamite, which would explode in less than a minute, had been left in the bank vault. The robbers then fled in the waiting cars and the employees ran for their lives as the warnings of the bandits penetrated their numbed wits.

Terrific explosions had wrecked both bank buildings completely, doing great damage to adjoining structures, killing five persons and injuring a dozen.

Radio, telephone and telegraph were called into the service of the authorities. Police cars and motorcycles cruised the streets, and a cordon was flung about the city, but none of the renegades responsible for the two outrages had been caught in the net by noon. The get-aways had evidently been as carefully and cleverly planned as the robberies themselves.

Sam Armstrong and Ted Morris lunched together in a little café across the street from the *Argus* building. Both were weary from the strenuous work of the morning.

"Well, Hunch," growled the editor, "you clicked again. Why in thunder, do you suppose, did the eggs blow up those banks—literally blow the buildings to smithereens after they had sacked up all the money?"

"I think I have that all doped out straight," said Armstrong, "but with your kind permission I'll interview my opulent male parent right after lunch and verify my dope."

"What do you think your father will know about it?" inquired Morris.

"Whatever there is to be known," grinned the reporter. "Dad collects banks—in the language of the Bible, he gathers them under his wings as a hen gathereth her chickens."

"You're a funny duck, Hunch," observed the editor. "If I were the only son of Martin Armstrong, I bet you I wouldn't be working on a newspaper and living in a furnished flat. Can't you get along with your father?"

"We get along splendidly," grinned Armstrong, "by the simple method of remaining apart, except for dinner together on occasions, and a fishing trip together now and then. We simply have a very poor opinion of each other's occupations. As I see it, Dad wastes a lot of energy and ability gathering in and storing up shekels for which he has no earthly use. As Dad sees it, I'm squandering my life in seeking out and writing stuff that means nothing and is read by nobody. The situation has resolved itself to where we each go our own way and let the other pursue his own methods of being useless."

"Yeah?" smiled Morris. "And what is the reason you've doped out for this funny business in these bank affairs?"

"I think a new racket looms on the horizon," answered the reporter. "Pug Gatti is behind it. That's why he and Lefty Leo were having breakfast in Henri's. They didn't leave there, I've found out, until the extras hit the street. Gatti had those two jobs pulled, and the way they were pulled tells me why. Gatti has tried to organize the banks. That's about the only racket he hasn't worked yet in this

town. He's shaking down almost every other business and industry for plenty. It looks to me as if the banks balked when he put the old 'protection' gag up to them—and this morning's events were just a little missionary work in Mr. Gatti's new field of endeavor."

"Elucidate," demanded Morris.

"Banks carry insurance," explained Armstrong. "If they are robbed, they simply put in a claim, and the insurance company is the ultimate loser. On the other hand, if a bank is robbed and then blasted from the site upon which it stood, the insurance is not likely to cover the total money and property loss. Also there is the destruction of records and securities, and the fact that the bank is out of business for some time at least."

"And so?" grunted the editor as Armstrong paused.

"And so the bank itself is definitely hurt," answered the reporter. "That seems to have been the basic idea behind this morning's affairs—to injure the banks beyond insurance coverage. As I said before, Gatti probably met resistance when he tried to add the banks to his string of rackets. This morning he made examples of two institutions as a warning to the others."

"By thunder!" exclaimed Ted Morris. "If you are right, this is big."

"I'm right—and it's big," assured Armstrong. "This morning was the beginning of more consecutive and

energetic hell than has popped in this old burg for a long time—or else the strongest hunch I ever had is phony. If I were running a newspaper instead of working for one, I'd hire some extra help and contract for an extra supply of paper. Big news'll be so plentiful in the immediate future that it'll choke the presses."

"You've assigned yourself," declared the editor. "Shoot along and see your father. Get his opinion for publication if you can."

"Dad," observed Armstrong, "does violent things to reporters who seek his opinion for publication."

"Including you?" inquired Ted Morris.

"Especially me!" agreed the reporter. "But I'll see what can be done."

In a small private dining-room off a balcony in a notorious cabaret and night-club known as the Valparaiso, Pug Gatti and his right-hand man "Lefty" Leo Sartor were having lunch. The subject of their conversation was the same as that of the two newspaper men.

Pug Gatti, so named because he had once been a second-rate pugilist, was a thickly built man of medium height.

He was expensively dressed and groomed. His gross features were swarthy. Black eyes were set a bit too close on either side of a big nose, and his lips were both sensuous and cruel. There was a bit of bully-like swagger about the big shot, but he was as dangerous as dynamite. Many other men of his own stripe had underestimated Pug Gatti when they found themselves standing in his path to the throne of Gangland. As a result, they had been put to bed with a spade—under a blanket of flowers which Gatti supplied.

Bootlegging had lifted Pug Gatti from the ranks of pool-hall loafers and started him on his way to wealth and power. He had increased the fields of his lawless endeavor until he was now a sort of criminal Alexander, seeking new conquests. His rackets were legion. His monopoly of the liquor traffic was almost absolute. Millions of dollars every month flowed into the coffers of the gangster chief—to leave an impressive residue, despite the staggering pay-off. Bribery, intimidation, murder and violence were his weapons. It was his open boast that he held the city in the hollow of his hand.

Lefty Leo was a slender, oily individual with an almost expressionless face. Opaque moss-agate eyes which told nothing of his thoughts or emotions were set deep under heavy black brows. He was a born killer, and his twisted brain was in some ways more clever than Gatti's.

"Guess there won't be much argument from the banks now when Lippman's boys call on 'em," gloated Gatti. "Not when the boys remind them that the Edgewood and Baker Boulevard dunces were offered protection just a week before they had this hard luck."

"I got a notion," observed Lefty, "that you may be figuring this too easy. This money racket is big—and it's been operating longer than any of ours. Somewhere behind it there must be an old he big-shot with a tubful of brains and a lot of drag in the right places."

"What of it?" shrugged Gatti. "I guess I aint got any drag in this burg! Hell—I own it! I've got those bankers where the hair is short. Before you know it, we'll be drawing a whale of a bundle out of the banks every month, without writing any checks. Lippman's crew should have a lot of 'em lined up before night."

"Just the same," insisted Lefty. "I'll bet you it aint gonna be so easy. Banks aint like delicatessens and shoe-stores."

"No," growled Gatti. "They got more dough. Call Dopey, and I'll buy a drink."

When Lefty Leo had surmised that "there must be an old he big-shot," somewhere behind the "money racket," he might have been describing Martin Armstrong, president of the Armstrong Developments, Inc. Except when he was among them, Martin Armstrong's associates spoke of him as "the old Grizzly." And he

fitted the sobriquet in both physique and nature. In the financial and business world he was a power to be reckoned with.

It was shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon of the day upon which disaster had overtaken the two suburban banks. Seated at the massive desk in his big and well-furnished private office, Martin Armstrong slammed the receiver onto the hook with a ferocity which threatened to put the instrument out of commission. He had been talking to James F. Pride, president of the Shipper's National bank. The old Grizzly's blue eyes blazed with anger as he leaned back in his swivel chair and savagely bit the end of a cigar.

Rage was boiling in his breast. He had just been informed by the president of the Shipper's National that the bank must either pay one thousand dollars a month to be "protected" by a concern known as the "Metropolitan Bank Guardians" or suffer the consequences. Martin Armstrong owned the controlling interest in the Shipper's National and was chairman of the board of directors.

There was no need of a diagram to show the old Grizzly what was in the wind. Pug Gatti was organizing the bank racket—and the Shipper's National alone was to be shaken down for a cool thousand dollars a month. Martin Armstrong heaved his huge, gaunt body from the chair and began to pace the floor of the office like a caged lion.

"Blackmail!" growled the old Grizzly as he paced. "Brazen blackmail! Hell of a state of affairs when even the banks have to hand bundles of money to a rat like Pug Gatti every month to keep from being robbed or bombed!"

Seventy-two years of life had turned Martin Armstrong's thick shock of hair to silver-gray and taken its toll from his huge body, but the indomitable spirit which had made him what he was remained unchanged. There were railroads now operating through vast territories because Martin Armstrong had refused to take the word of engineers who said they could not be built. Those railroads and scores of other far-flung enterprises were now operating, and profitably—controlled from his central offices by the shaggy, grizzled old man who now strode up and down his private sanctum in boiling indignation. It was an old saw in the world in which

Martin Armstrong moved that the one sure way to get a thing done was to tell the old Grizzly that he couldn't do it. Over the telephone James Pride, the bank president, had told Armstrong that it was his

opinion the bank had better pay the tribute that was demanded—since it was impossible to buck the sinister and ruthless organization of which Pug Gatti was brains and boss.

"By the razzed tail of Gilderoy's kite," snarled the enraged captain of



"Have an accident?" he inquired curtly.
"No. Had an argument with Squarehead Brodersen."

finance and industry, "this is the last straw! It's a whole bale of last straws. I'm going to make Pug Gatti eat 'em."

Having declared himself, Martin Armstrong grew calmer. With his big blunt-fingered hands clasped behind his broad back, he resumed his pacing. But now his pace was slow and his leonine head was bowed. The old Grizzly was thinking hard. Presently he halted beside the desk.

"I've got Pug Gatti to whip," muttered the old Grizzly, summing up his problem. "Gatti's a dirty, crafty and unscrupulous crook. He's got an organization of the same kind of skunks with him—thieves, thugs, maulers and killers. He has most of the town scared stiff—and the rest of it bought. What's the country coming to? Half our people waiting for a chance to sell themselves! I've got to whip Gatti and his crew—and what have I got to whip 'em with? What—"

A timid tap on the door of the private office interrupted the soliloquy, and a tall, thin youngster entered, bearing a handful of documents.

"Mr. Thomas said to bring you these—" began the youth.

"Put 'em on the desk!" barked the old Grizzly. "You're a sample!"

"Ye-e-e-e-s sir," stammered the lad, dropping the documents on the desk and backing toward the door.

"Wait a minute," growled Armstrong.

"Yes sir," gulped the youth, freezing to the spot.

"How old are you?"

"Sev-seventeen."

"Seventeen," snapped the old Grizzly. "Seventeen—and look it! When I was your age, I was a sailor in Uncle Sam's navy—and a good one, too. Lied my way in and made it stick. Did you ever make anything stick?"

The frightened lad did not answer.

"Get out!"

The boy fled, and the old man stood glaring in scornful silence at the door which had closed behind him.

"A sample," muttered Martin Armstrong, disgust dripping from his words, "a sample of what I've got to fight Pug Gatti's gunmen with! I'm paying several thousand people wages every week—and I'd be cheating the petshop if I traded the whole bunch for a bowl of cross-eyed goldfish! Jellyfish! All I've got is money. Some—"

He halted abruptly and jabbed a big forefinger on one button of the row on the corner of his desk. Several moments later a stoop-shouldered, half-bald man of medium height entered the office. He wore horn-rimmed spectacles, and his face was sallow—the complexion of the indoor man. He was Thomas Leigh, head accountant. Martin

Armstrong glared at the man as if he had been something the scrubwoman had left on the rug.

"How old are you?" demanded Armstrong.

"Forty, Mr. Armstrong," answered the man in a flat, respectful voice.

"Forty," repeated the irate old man. "What would you do if I should sock you one on the nose?"

A startled look came into the mild eyes behind the glasses. Leigh seemed for a moment on the point of flight, but he held his ground.

"Mr. Armstrong," he protested, "you wouldn't do that!"

"The hell I wouldn't!" bellowed the old Grizzly. "I'm liable to do it any minute."

Forty years old! Prime of life! I'm seventy-two,—in the grave up to my armpits,—and you don't know what you'd do if I'd paste you one. Bah! And the town is made up of millions more just like you. No wonder—"

The old man halted his tirade and glared fiercely at the head accountant. The man stood waiting in uncomfortable silence.

"If I were to sell out, lock

stock and barrel, immediately," demanded Martin Armstrong presently, "how much money would I have?"

"Roughly," answered Leigh, "forty million dollars."

"Then I'm safe from the poorhouse for a while," grunted Armstrong.

"Yes sir," answered the accountant, relief in his voice and a feeble smile on his lips.

"Yes," barked Martin Armstrong. "Yes! I didn't ask a question. I made a statement. Get out! The streets will soon be full of job-hunting yes-men that have been drawing pay from me. If all the yes-men in this town would stage a parade, they'd have to import the spectators."

The accountant started to say "Yes sir," but caught himself and made a quick and silent exit.

"Damnation!" growled the old Grizzly. "Why in blazes do I pay salaries to a bunch of tailor's dummies? If I only had a few dozen real men—men like—" His muttering ceased abruptly, and a gleam came to his eyes. The black sowl gave way to a slow and half-surprised smile. Then his great fist came down on his desk with a crash that made the inkwell jump. "And by the great horned spoon, I've got 'em! I'd darned near forgot 'em—but I've got 'em."

Martin Armstrong dropped heavily into his chair before the desk. The smile on his face widened to a delighted grin, and the gleam in his eyes did not dim. The old man had just remembered his vast Canadian timber holdings—and the lumberjacks who were laboring in them. Martin



Sax grinned. "Pug Gatti is going to find Armstrong and Son a hard team to beat!"

had spent several years of his earlier youth in the active management of his logging projects. In his day there had been few men who could equal him with ax, peavy and pike-pole.

Now he remembered the hundreds of men busy turning virgin forests into logs, ready for his numerous sawmills.

"I've got 'em!" chortled the old Grizzly. "Pug Gatti and his hoodlums. Gunmen! Muscle men! Say I'll show him muscle men! He never saw a muscle man—but he's going to! I'll show him a flock of honest - to - God hell-benders with hair on their chests and iron in their blood."

The old man reached toward the buttons on his desk, but his hand halted as the door opened swiftly and Sax Armstrong stepped into the private office. The old Grizzly's greeting was a grunt. He glared at the lanky figure of his son.

"Hello, Dad," grinned Sax.

"What you want?" demanded his father.

"I'm busy. I've no time to be interviewed by any reporters."

"All peeveish, eh?" chuckled Sax. "Just because Pug Gatti's bad boys busted up a couple of your playthings this morning."

"I'll bust his confounded head!" belched the old Grizzly. "I'll—"

"A noble ambition," remarked Sax as his father paused, groping for words. "It will make a whale of a yarn: 'Racketeer Chief's Head Busted by Irate Millionaire.' When and where will the busting take place? I'd like to have a photographer on the job."

"Listen, you," shouted the old Grizzly, "this is no joke. Don't you realize that banks are the backbone of—"

"So you've told me before," nodded Sax. "Sorry, Dad. I didn't intend to speak flippantly of your pet institutions. I've an idea about this business that was pulled off this morning—and I came around to discuss it with you."

"Huh," grunted Martin Armstrong. "If you've got an idea about any business except monkey-business with a typewriter, I'd like to hear it."

Sax Armstrong draped himself on the corner of his father's massive desk. The amusement faded from his thin but rugged face. He swiftly outlined for his father the surmise he had drawn for the city editor at lunch. The old Grizzly listened with rapt attention.

"Am I right?" inquired the reporter in conclusion.

"Yes," growled his father, "but what of it? All you'll do about it is write a lot of drivel for a fool newspaper."

"And what do you intend to do?" asked Sax.

"I'm going to bust this crook Gatti and his gang wide

open," barked the old Grizzly. "That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to wipe 'em off the slate. When I get through, gangsters and racketeers will be cleaned out of this town so clean that they'll have to stuff one and keep him in the museum to remember what they looked like."

"I approve the project," smiled Sax. "In fact, I'd like to help. This is the first time I ever heard you plan to do anything except corral another bundle of dough that you don't need."

"Well, I'll be a bowlegged catfish!" snorted the old Grizzly. "You approve! You want to help me do something! Just how in thunder do you think you could help?"

"If you'd tell me what you intend to do—"

"You'd put it all in the paper," cut in the elder Armstrong sharply. "A lot of help that would be!"

"Be serious, Dad," begged Sax. "I promise you I'll publish nothing about your plans without your permission. This town needs renovating—and I'd like to help. You might be surprised how much I can help if you really mean to tackle the job."

"All right!" snapped the old Grizzly, after surveying his son for some moments in frowning silence. "I'll tell you what I'm going to do—and I'll break your neck if you put a word in the paper."

For ten minutes Sax listened while his father outlined the thing he had in mind. When the old man had finished, Sax nodded gravely.

The unconscious gangsters were transferred to the warehouse, securely trussed, and hidden behind a tier of barrels.

"It's a good idea, Dad," he declared. "But there are a lot of rough corners on it. I'll help you smooth it up. We'll make it work. With your money and my brains we'll be a hard pair to beat."

"Listen, you gangling young whipper-snapper," sputtered the old Grizzly. "I'll—"

"Hold everything, Dad," chuckled Sax. "You run along and get your lumberjacks. By the time you get back with your help, I'll have the skids all greased."

For a few moments Armstrong père sat glaring at the door which had closed behind his only child. Then his eyes softened, and a half-wistful smile—it seemed lost on that rugged face—twitched at his mouth.

"Danged dilly-dallying newsmonger!" muttered Martin Armstrong. "But he aint a blithering yes-man. Maybe—" His voice died away, and a big blunt finger punched one of the row of buttons at his elbow.



Olga Rydholm, Armstrong's secretary and a very efficient young woman, entered in response to his ring.

"Miss Rydholm," snapped Armstrong, "call Manning. Tell him to have the plane ready to hop in half an hour without fail. Long jump."

Without a word the young woman turned and left the office. Martin Armstrong snatched up the telephone, and in short order was again talking to James Pride, the bank president.

"How long have you got to answer these gangsters about this protection stuff?" demanded the Grizzly.

"A week," answered Pride. "The fellow was in to see me yesterday. I told him they would have to wait until after our next board meeting, which is next Wednesday."

"Good!" snapped Armstrong. "Send me over five thousand dollars in twenty-dollar bills and make it snappy. I'll give the messenger the check. See you later." He hung up the receiver and again rang for his secretary. The young woman responded promptly.

"The plane will be ready," she announced.

"Good," grunted the Grizzly. "I'll be out of town until noon tomorrow. In case anything urgent should come up, you can reach me by telephone tonight at the Number One mill in Canada."

It was shortly after three o'clock when Armstrong arrived at the Long Island landing-field where his cabin plane waited with engine warmed up and Joe Manning, the pilot, standing in flying togs beside the trim craft.

"Can you make the Number One mill in Canada before dark?" demanded Armstrong.

"Easily," answered the bronzed young pilot.

Alone in the six-passenger cabin of the ship as it leveled off and headed northwest, the Grizzly grinned happily, lighted a cigar and settled comfortably in his chair. "We'll soon see, Mr. Pug Gatti!" he muttered. "We'll soon see."

Dusk was gathering when the plane glided to a landing in a clearing on the outskirts of a sawmill town in the Canadian wilderness. Martin Armstrong had put that town there. The wages he paid to its inhabitants kept it there. From the town, a narrow-gauge railroad wound away into the forests. Ten minutes after the plane landed, the old Grizzly was in the cab of one of the teapot engines as it headed out of town toward a logging camp where the woods-boss was a young man known as Tamarack Sills.

It was dark, and supper was over when the lone engine arrived at the logging-camp. Tamarack Sills heard the engine arrive and went to the door of the shack which was his office and sleeping quarters. He stared with a puzzled frown as he recognized the bulky figure that had dropped from the engine and was striding through the snow toward his shack.

TAMARACK SILLS was tall, lean and raw-boned. He was thirty years old. His face was bronzed, and his shaggy head of dark brown hair was thick and unruly. Rugged physical strength radiated from his lanky frame, and calm courage looked from his gray eyes. His mouth was wide and firm, and a long, lean jaw ended in a stubborn chin. He wore a faded gray flannel shirt, and patched and worn corduroy breeches were tucked into his heavy boots. He was the son of Whitewater Sills, who had been the pal of Martin Armstrong in the old days.

"Hello, Mr. Armstrong."

"Hello, Sills."

The hands of the two men met in a firm grip. Armstrong followed the youngster into the shack. The Grizzly had noticed several patches of court-plaster on the bronzed face of the woods-boss.

"Have an accident, Tamarack?" he inquired curtly.

"No," answered Sills. "Had an argument with Square-head Brodersen about laying a skidway."

"Where's Brodersen?"

"Over in the bunkhouse," replied the woods-boss. "He promised to be back on the job in the morning."

"I see," grinned Martin Armstrong. "Listen, son: I've got something to talk over with you. Sit down."

Tamarack Sills sat down. For half an hour the old man talked while the woods-boss listened. Sills remained silent, but a smile twitched at his lips, and his gray eyes glistened.

"And that's the size of it," concluded the Grizzly. "Send the men to town in bunches as fast as you can gather them up. Have them report to me at the address I gave you. Get three hundred, or as near that many as you can. Remember, I want 'em tough—the kind that go back to work a couple of minutes after a peavy has been bounced off their heads. Brains don't count. What I want is guts and backbone. I'll pay their fare both ways, and they get ten dollars a day each as long as they are in the city—and all they have to do is fight when I tell 'em to."

"What about the mills?" asked Tamarack.

"The mills can use up the logs on hand and then shut down until you fellows get back," answered Armstrong grimly. "I'll take care of that. You get the men—quick. If you need more money, wire for it. You come in with the last bunch."

"I've got you," grinned Sills. . . .

Martin Armstrong was back in his office shortly after ten o'clock next morning. He was in a mellow mood—for him; but he glowered at the stack of mail on his desk and rang for his secretary.

"Miss Rydholm," he said when the secretary stood before him, "call the office of the *Argus* and see if my son can spare enough of his valuable time to dine with me at seven o'clock at the club."

FATHER and son faced each other across a table in the exclusive Calumet Club. Since the death of his wife some ten years before, the Grizzly had lived at the club. Sax had forsaken the parental roof about a year after influenza took his mother. He lived in a modest apartment on the fringe of the downtown business district and within walking distance of the *Argus*.

Dinner finished, the Armstrongs talked earnestly for more than an hour. A new respect for his independent son was growing in the old Grizzly. The lanky youth, with years of newspaper experience behind him, was able to supply much information and make a number of suggestions which helped greatly in rounding out the plan conceived by his dynamic father. The Grizzly was quick to realize the value of the names, addresses and other such things at the instant command of his reporter son.

"Well," said Armstrong, Sr., finally, "the boys from the camps are coming. I'll put you in charge of them as soon as they are all here. But mind you don't get gay and go to pulling off any funny business until you talk it over with me."

"Check," grinned Sax. "Pug Gatti is going to find Armstrong and Son a hard team to beat in this shindy. And now I've got to get back to the sheet, or Ted Morris will tie a can to my tail."

During the next few days three hundred men arrived, in lots of from a dozen to a score, and scattered themselves about the city in "flop-houses" and second-class hotels, acting under orders given them by Tamarack Sills. They were a formidable lot, these newcomers. Not one of them would object to fighting his weight in wildcats, with an extra he-cat thrown in for good measure. . . .

Then came a night when they gathered near the water-

front in a big warehouse that was the property of Martin Armstrong. The old Grizzly called the meeting to order and introduced his son to the assembled lumberjacks. Sax and Tamarack Sills had met at the Grizzly's office, and as they gripped hands, kindred spirits had gazed at each other from the eyes of the reporter and the woods-boss.

The men were informed that thereafter they were to take orders from Sax through Tamarack Sills. Then Sax took the floor and the Grizzly sat back and listened. He smiled with grim pride as he heard his son speaking.

"We will need only forty men for tonight's work," Sax concluded. "Tamarack Sills will pick those men and show them what to do. The rest of you will stay where you can be reached quickly in case you are needed. And stay sober! You must be able to fight."

There was a murmur of approval from the gathered men. Then they began to leave the building in twos and threes. During the past day or two they had discarded their woods garments, and now wore rough but less conspicuous garb.

AT about the same time there was another conference in session in the headquarters of Pug Gatti, an "office" built off the rear of a pool- and billiard-parlor on the fringe of the Tenderloin district. Half a dozen of his most trusted lieutenants were gathered about their chief. Gatti's evil face was a thundercloud. He had just learned that the Shipper's National bank, after a meeting of the board of directors, had refused to contract for "protection."

The big shot had been counting on the Shipper's National as a bell-wether. With it on the list, the other banks of the city would follow like bewildered sheep. But the Shipper's National had balked.

"Saps!" snarled Gatti. "If they didn't learn anything from what happened to those banks last week, they'll take a tumble to themselves after what happens to the Shipper's National tonight. They'll learn to shell out when I tell 'em to! Now you guys listen!" . . .

At a quarter of four in the morning three big bullet-proof sedans rolled along the street and approached the Shipper's bank building, situated in the heart of the city's best business district. In those cars rode a dozen evil-faced men who were on their way to carry out Pug Gatti's order to "give the damned Shipper's National bank something to think about."

Sax Armstrong, seated in a small armchair lunchroom less than half a block from the bank, saw the little parade pass, and rose hastily to hurry out onto the street. From the shadow of a doorway the reporter watched.

The streets were as nearly deserted as the streets of a big city ever are. The three sinister autos drew up before the main entrance of the bank building, the middle car being just in front of the windows of the banking-rooms.

Four men emerged from that middle car. Two of them carried ordinary bricks, and the other pair carried more bulky objects. The two with the bricks heaved their missiles at the great windows. The sound of falling glass followed the crash as the bricks shattered the two expanses of pane. The other two gangsters touched the glowing tips of cigars to short fuses protruding from the bulky objects they carried. Then they hurled the bulky objects through the openings the bricks had made.

Then—something happened that had not been in Pug Gatti's plan. The night silence was suddenly shattered by the clatter of gunfire. The four men on the sidewalk leaped toward the waiting car, but only one reached it. The other three wilted to earth like grain before a sickle.

The gangster autos got under way with a howl of gears and a roar of mighty motors. But their flight died a-borning. From many windows in other buildings along the street leaped tongues of flame. The street echoed

back the angry voices of two score high-powered rifles. From those many windows, the rifles, in the hands of men who knew how to handle them, sent leaden death searching the fleeing autos for a victim. From a dozen windows hand-grenades were hurled, to explode with deafening crashes under the very wheels of the fleeing cars.

The ambush was one hundred per cent successful. The front and rear cars of the trio carried gangsters armed with machine-guns to cover the retreat, but those cold-blooded killers never got a chance to open fire. Suddenly transformed into twisted wreckage by the grenades, the three cars lay at the mercy of hundreds of bullets that cut away the shielding glass and searched the dark interiors.

Then the neighborhood trembled as the bombs which the gangsters had hurled into the bank building exploded with a terrific crash. Then an unnatural silence fell.

Police officers arriving a few minutes later found the three wrecked cars, and gathered in seven dead and five wounded gangsters. The first trap set by the old Grizzly had closed on its prey.

Sax Armstrong went from the scene to his office, where he wrote an eyewitness story of the affair and left it on Ted Morris' desk. On the final sheet a note read:

I'm going to grab an hour or two of sleep. I'll call you in the morning after I have seen Dad.

It was nearly ten o'clock in the morning when Sax Armstrong, straight from a conference with his father and Tamarack Sills, reached the office of the *Argus*. The paper was on the street with the story Sax had written and additional details picked up by other reporters.

"Looks as if your old man meant it when he said he was going to fight," observed Ted Morris as Sax sat down on a corner of the city desk.

"Yes," nodded the reporter. "Got to give Dad his dues. Eight is his middle name and his religion."

"Got a new story?" inquired the editor.

"Nothing more for today," replied Sax. "But you can keep the help ready to break out with an extra shortly after eleven o'clock tonight. This burg is going to see things tonight such as it never saw before. I'll write most of the story now—and work in the propaganda. Then I'll have to skip along and get ready to make the story come true. I'll telephone in your lead as soon as things start to happen."

THAT night, at eleven o'clock, business was going on as usual in a speak-easy known as Wop Mike's place. There were perhaps twenty men and several women of a certain sort in the joint. The front windows were painted and heavily curtained. The place was entered by a side door opening off a narrow court. Along one side of the room was the bar, behind which three bartenders were busy. Along the other side were several tables in make-shift boothss. The air was blue with smoke.

Six of the men ranged along the bar were big, bronzed chaps in the off-duty garments of laborers. One of the six was Tamarack Sills. At exactly eleven o'clock things happened with a suddenness that dazed all but the six bronzed men. Two of them had been arguing quietly over their drinks at one end of the bar. Suddenly the argument assumed the proportions of a battle. The nearest bartenders darted around the end of the bar and moved to separate the belligerents. A big, bony fist smacked into the would-be bouncer's jaw, and another plunked into his middle. He folded up like a jackknife and sank down against the front of the bar.

A woman screamed. The other bartender whirled and reached for an automatic that lay on the back bar. Tamarack Sills reached out a long arm, grabbed the white-



"Saps!" snarled Gatti. "They'll learn to shell out when I tell 'em to! Now you guys listen!"

- aproned man by the collar, jerked him backwards over the bar and flung him into one of the flimsy booths. The table overturned, and the partition collapsed as the heavy body thudded into it. A burly thug who had been in the place all evening and was carrying a pretty heavy cargo of hooch leaped at Tamarack, swinging a vicious fist. Tamarack dodged and tripped the rushing bruiser. As he pitched forward, one of Sills' comrades fetched the thug a clip under the ear that stretched him limp between the bar and the brass rail.

Two women were screaming, and edging hurriedly along the wall toward the exit. A sallow fellow scrambled up from where an ax-man's fist had flattened him, grabbed a chair from beside one of the tables and swung it high as he leaped snarling toward the man who had knocked him down. A grinning man who had recently been holding down a tool-dresser's job reached out and tapped the sallow one over the head with a half-emptied ale bottle. The bottle broke. The chair dropped harmlessly from the sallow thug's hand, and he wilted.

In three minutes it was over. The women had fled screaming from the place, followed by several men who had no stomach for such amusement. In no time at all the place looked as if it had been used to detain a tornado. Then a police whistle sounded from not far away.

"Check!" bellowed Tamarack Sills. "Fade! You know there's an extra twenty bucks tomorrow for every timber-hog that don't have to be got out of jail."

A moment later the six were out of the door dashing *en masse* along the court on which it opened. A policeman in uniform ran into the court just as the lumberjacks were nearing its mouth. The officer came to fifteen minutes later and tried to decide whether it was a steam-roller or a fire-engine that had run over him?

"Scatter!" snapped Tamarack as they reached the street....

At exactly the same time as the free-for-all started in Wop Mike's, eruptions of the same brand took place in forty-two other speak-easies, beer-flats and cabarets scattered in all parts of the city. The lumberjacks, with the advantage of surprise on their side, joyfully and thoroughly demoralized resistance and sent peaceably inclined patrons of the dives stampeding for doors and windows in

search of safety. Punishing fists of the men from the timber did their work, and the victors finished off their tasks by wrecking the dives in a most thorough manner. In only five places guns took part in the mêlée. The casualties in the ranks of the lumberjacks were one man with a bullet in his thigh, and seven who fell into the hands of the police. They did not count scratches, cuts and bruises, nor torn garments—of which there were plenty.

The police were going around in circles and the town was in an uproar. The *Argus* had, on the word of Sax Armstrong, kept a night staff ready. Their extra was first on the street with a surprisingly complete and detailed account of the raids. The story in the *Argus* concluded:

"Shortly after rioting began in forty-three liquor-dispensing places last night, a party who refused to give his name called the *Argus* on the telephone and announced that he and a number of associates were responsible for the outbursts.

"We have wrecked forty-three places owned and operated by Pug Gatti," said the mysterious caller, "and we have only begun. Gatti has been a public nuisance and a disgrace to the community long enough. His finish is near. We smashed his henchmen who bombed the Shupper's National bank. We have done forty-three good jobs tonight. And we'll strike again soon.

"Gatti may buy the police and judges. He may intimidate juries. But he is up against something now that he can neither buy nor frighten. We have declared open season on gangsters and racketeers. We call upon all honest citizens to help us—and warn all concerned that it is dangerous from now on to be in any place with which Pug Gatti is in any way concerned."

Shortly after midnight Pug Gatti and a dozen of his most trusted lieutenants sat in conference in the big shot's office behind the pool-hall. Gatti had just finished reading the *Argus* extra. His face was gray with cold fury, and his black eyes blazed.

"By God!" snarled Gatti. "Somebody's asking for it—and somebody's going to get it. Forty-three joints wrecked! They'll have to stay shut too for a while—and that's bad for business. Out to smash us, huh? We'll be at the smashing. This paper says seven of the bunch

that did the rough stuff were nabbed. I want some men put on the job to tail them when they are sprung. I don't know just what the game is, but I'm going to damn' quick find out!"

"You can bet your chips," observed Lefty Leo Sartor, "that this is the result of monkeying with the banks. I told you that money racket was a bad thing to muscle into. We've collected a lousy four grand so far—and that wouldn't pay for the cars we lost in the Shipper's National job, to say nothing of the boys we lost. And figure up what this thing tonight is going—"

"Listen," cut in Gatti. "I started to organize the banks, and I'll do it or put the last one of them out of business. I'll dope out some tricks they haven't thought of. But first, I want to find the bozo that's behind this new mob. Here's the lay."

FOR fifteen minutes Gatti talked, outlining a plan for finding the man or men directing the drive against him. The henchmen listened in silence. It was about half-past twelve when the meeting broke up. Pug Gatti and Lefty Leo went directly to the Golden Calf, a night-club which was the big shot's particular pride—and one of the best money-makers of all his dives. The cover charge at the Golden Calf was five dollars, and the wine cost twenty-five dollars a bottle. The entertainment was the sort expected in such places.

A moment after the two gang leaders entered the ornate portals of the dive, a young man who had been sitting for some time in a parked car across the street started the machine and drove away. That young man was part of a hastily organized "detective bureau" for which Sax Armstrong had supplied the idea. The reporter had also rustled the personnel of the bureau. They were young men who knew by sight the big shot and most of his sub-chiefs. The youth who had been watching the Golden Calf drove to a near-by drug-store and put in a call for Martin Armstrong.

At two o'clock the Golden Calf was going strong. A dozen well-dressed but tough-looking individuals loitered on the street before the place—extra guards placed on the job by Gatti. In view of the events of the past few hours, Gatti was taking no chances.

Other gangsters sat in big autos parked at the curb. Machine-guns were ready to hurl death from the windows of those cars at the first sign of an attack on the place. But the hoodlums had never faced such an attack as the one that came about ten minutes after two.

"Who-o-o-pee-e!"

The neighborhood suddenly rang with the deep-throated cry. The man who uttered it had frequently made himself heard across more than a mile of timber-land, and he put all the power of his mighty lungs into that cry. It froze Gatti's henchmen and all others who heard it into temporary immobility. As it died away, a horde of brawny men came racing around the two nearest corners. They had been gathering for the past ten minutes in the shadows of the two side-streets.

From two directions three hundred lumberjacks bore down upon the Golden Calf and the gangsters who skulked before it. From three hundred throats came lusty answers to the first signal cry.

Then the charging lumberjacks were upon their prey. Iron-hard fists landed, and hoodlums with half-drawn guns suddenly lost interest in the proceedings. Scores of hands grasped places of vantage on the cars in which the machine-guns lurked, and the cars were overturned like cracker-boxes. Their occupants revived later, bruised and badly beaten.

Into the Golden Calf, through doors literally kicked from

their hinges, surged the bellowing horde of woodsmen. Pandemonium ensued. The guests trampled each other in futile efforts to escape. Every exit began to disgorge terrified patrons of both sexes.

That crew of men had taken apart many a saloon and gambling dive in the backwoods of the North, but this was the first time they had known the joy of hurling teakwood tables inlaid with mother of pearl into engraved plate-glass mirrors!

Before the police could reach the scene, the Golden Calf was a ruin. The destroyers had mingled with the fleeing patrons and were on their way elsewhere. Only two men were found to have been seriously hurt in the fracas. Pug Gatti and Lefty Leo Sartor were picked up off the floor of the wrecked establishment and rushed to an emergency hospital. Both had been scientifically manhandled.

The morning edition of the *Argus* carried the story of the wrecking of the Golden Calf. In a "box" on the front page was another message from the mysterious individual who claimed to be responsible for the "open season on racketeers." The message pointed out once more that the drive against the minions of Pug Gatti had only begun. It repeated the warning that all places conducted or supervised by Pug Gatti should be shunned by persons with weak hearts.

At ten o'clock the following morning Sax Armstrong, Tamarack Sills and Martin Armstrong sat in conference in the old Grizzly's office.

"There is an old Chinese saw," remarked Sax Armstrong, "to the effect that there is a time to fish and a time to dry the nets. I'd like to suggest that, having done some very fancy fishing, we now dry the nets."

"I'm no Chinaman," grunted the Grizzly. "Speak English. Tell us what's on your mind."

"I think," went on the reporter, "that it is time to call off your lumberjacks and let them lie low for a few days. The hospital reports that Gatti and Lefty Leo will be there for some time. I'll keep my detective bureau on the job, and we'll hit another lick as soon as I line things up. A day or two of rest won't hurt your timber-hogs. Some of them look as if they had been arguing with a buzzsaw."

As matters worked out, the lumberjacks got three days of rest. Then they were called out, and joyfully and completely wrecked three "alky-cooking" plants and destroyed the huge stores of liquor in the attached warehouses.

The news of this latest blow reached Pug Gatti in the hospital and came near inducing apoplexy. The racketeer chief finally grew calmer and lay brooding and planning as long hours dragged past. Because of what had happened, and the way the papers, particularly the *Argus*, had played it up, his speak-easies were not paying expenses. People were afraid to enter them. The loss of the plants and stored stocks of liquor was a severe blow. In the face of the late developments his grip on his numerous other rackets was slipping. His victims were losing their fear of him. Gatti pondered all this for two more days before he and Lefty Leo were discharged from the hospital. The gang chieftain returned to his headquarters a cornered rat—and more dangerous, even if his power had diminished.

NEARLY a week of comparative quiet passed. The lumberjacks had been withdrawn from action. No overt acts came from the underworld, but a strange, foreboding tenseness was growing throughout the city. Everyone seemed affected by it. It was like the lull that precedes a tornado. There was something ominous in the air.

Sax Armstrong's "detective bureau" was on the job night and day, but all they were able to report during the first few days was that some strange activity was going on in gangland. Furtive, bleak-faced men came and went from

Gatti's headquarters and circulated about the city. That was all.

Then it was reported to Sax that the *Dolly Lee*, a fast freighter owned by Gatti and used for some time to run rum, had docked for repairs. She had no cargo and was apparently seeking none. A watch was established over her, and finally one forenoon it was learned that the *Dolly Lee* was clearing port at midnight, that night, in ballast for Liverpool.

A pregnant inactivity had quieted the underworld. The nervous, electric tenseness held the city.

"Something is going to happen tonight," declared Sax Armstrong. He was speaking to his father, Tamarack Sills and Ted Morris in the old Grizzly's office. "I can't guess just what it is, but I'll bet my socks that it will be hellish. My hunch is to be ready and let Gatti start it. Then it will be up to us to finish it—for keeps. I think, Dad, that you'd better get busy and see that the police and detective departments are on the job in force and with their eyes wide open from dark on."

"All right," grunted the old man.

"And, Tamarack," continued Sax, "round up your buckoes. Here is a map. Spot them according to it as soon as it is dark tonight. You stay at the corner I have marked with the red cross. Keep six of your handiest men with you. I'll make the rounds soon after you have the crew placed. We are going to keep a close check on that ship of Gatti's. I'm full of a hunch that it's going to play a leading rôle in tonight's show."

GATTI, upon his release from the hospital, had gathered his disorganized forces and begun preparations to carry out the plan which had taken shape in his brain during his convalescence. Now the night for its execution was at hand. Forced to realize that he was pitted against a foe whom he could not master, the racketeer chief had decided to flee the city and the country on the heels of a final blow that would make history.

He had laid a plan of battle that seemed flawless. At nine o'clock Gatti and Lefty Leo were driven to the dock where the *Dolly Lee* lay with steam up, ready to sail at midnight. From hiding-places in the darkness many pairs of eyes watched while the gang chief and his henchmen went aboard. Word was sent swiftly from group to group of the lumberjacks lying in wait for whatever was to happen, but all remained quiet.

Sax Armstrong slipped away to a telephone in a corner drug-store and called his father.

"Hello, Dad?"

"Yes."

"Were you able to pull the strings over at the Navy Yard?"

"Yes. They have a cruiser ready with steam up and her crew aboard."

"Good. Better warn them that it won't be long now."

The reporter had just returned to the cordon of lumberjacks when Gatti and Lefty Leo came off the *Dolly Lee* and were driven away in the same car which had brought them.

Whispering to Tamarack Sills to follow him, Sax Armstrong hurried to a car which had been parked near by in case of such an emergency. Across town to the waterfront went the gangster's car, with Sax's machine keeping it always in sight.

"Going to his launch," said the reporter. "I had suspected that. He and Lefty intend to be away from here when whatever they have plotted is pulled off. They evidently mean to precede the *Dolly Lee* to wherever it is that she's going. I think Gatti's due for a surprise. He is, if things I sent some of my boys to do have worked out."

If they haven't, I have Dad's speed-boat spotted a short way up the river. We'll be able to stay with him."

The gangster's car had now stopped before a dock shed, and Sax swung his machine to the curb some fifty yards distant. Gatti and Lefty Leo got out of the car and entered the dock. Their car drove away. Sax and Tamarack were but a short distance behind the two racketeers when they emerged from the shed and approached a trim forty-foot launch which lay at the pier. The gangsters were greeted by two others who stood near the moored craft.

"Something funny's happened, Chief," said one of the two waiting men. "Two guys slipped onto the launch while me and Jack were gone to scoff about an hour ago. They took Shifty by surprise and tied him up. Then they swiped the core of the generator and some more gadgets and threw them into the water. We found Shifty when we got back and let him loose. He's gone to try to find some new parts."

Gatti swore fervently when the hoodlum had finished giving him information. He made it very clear that he didn't like the look of things. In lowered tones that made it impossible for the two watchers just inside the dark dock shed to hear what they were saying, the four beside the crippled launch talked for several moments. Then the two henchmen went aboard the launch, and Gatti and Lefty Leo started back toward the street.

"Get them," whispered Sax Armstrong to Tamarack Sills. "I'll take Gatti. Knock them cold."

The two racketeers came striding on. They entered the black shadows of the dock shed. The next moment the waiting youngsters struck. Heavy revolvers crashed down on two heads at almost the same instant, and Gatti and Lefty Leo wilted to the floor of the shed. The only sound was a low moan from Lefty Leo, and the double thud that their bodies struck the rough planks.

For a breath Sax and Tamarack waited, tense, watching the launch. Evidently, the thugs on the boat remained unaware of what had happened in the dark shed.

"I'll bring the car up to the door," whispered Sax. "Carry them over there, and we'll dump them in the back. Dad's warehouse is only two blocks from here. We can get them there before they begin to come out of it."

It took fifteen minutes to transfer the unconscious gangsters to the warehouse. They were securely trussed up and gagged before being hidden behind a tier of barrels. Tamarack then stayed on guard while Sax went across town and fetched back another man to watch the prisoners.

"They'll be safe now until we see what is going to happen," observed Sax. "Let's get back to the boys."

UNWARE of the fate that had overtaken their chief, the gangsters went into action according to the schedule Gatti had laid down. At ten minutes of twelve, fourteen men posted in as many blocks on the north edge of town threw bombs into fourteen buildings.

The terrific explosion rocked the neighborhood and created a panic. Five minutes later police reserves were racing for the scene by motorcycle and in fast cars. The men who had thrown the bombs hurried to the waterfront and clambered aboard a fast motorboat which sped away down the river to put them aboard the *Dolly Lee*. Their part in the night's horror had been to draw the police out of the lower portion of the city.

Sharply at midnight groups of masked hoodlums crashed into three hundred places scattered over the entire lower city. The places raided were restaurants, all-night drug-stores and such. Cash-registers were cleaned out, and terrified patrons robbed of cash and other valuables. The city was literally being sacked. The raiders in each place

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allowed themselves five minutes for their work. Then they dashed for the *Dolly Lee*, which was to bear them out of danger.

Policemen, hastening to the scenes of the raids, were shot down in cold blood by the retreating gangsters. Panic gripped the city. Death on wings of lead was abroad in every street as the hoodlums covered their retreat to the ship with roaring guns.

Like an avalanche, more than a thousand gangsters suddenly swept down upon the three hundred lumberjacks who were guarding the dock at which the *Dolly Lee* waited. In less than two minutes, it was a hand-to-hand fight. Guns on both sides were emptied, and there was no time to reload.

Fierce, bloody and short was that battle. Then, having crushed the lumberjacks with the weight of numbers, the gangsters swept out upon the dock and aboard the ship. But they had left nearly half their number behind.

As the *Dolly Lee* began to swing away from the dock, Sax Armstrong picked himself up from the cement floor of a basement areaway and wiped blood from his eyes with the back of his hand. He stumbled up the stairs down which he had fallen in reeling backward from a blow in the midriff. Blood from a flesh-wound in his upper left arm was dripping from his hand. He shook his head to clear the fog from his wits. Then he hurried down the street seeking a telephone.

Ten minutes sped past before Sax was able to get in touch with his father.

"I've already called the Navy Yard," answered the old Grizzly. "You hurt?"

"Not badly," answered Sax. "I'm going to the paper now. Send some cops to your south warehouse. Gatti and Lefty Leo are there with one of Tamarack's men standing guard over them."

Speeding for the high seas, the *Dolly Lee* found herself picked up by powerful searchlights. The roar of a big gun rumbled over the water and a shell skipped across the bows of the renegade ship. The warship was on the job. Here was something that had not been included in the scheme! The *Dolly Lee* hove to. It was that or be sent to Davy Jones' locker by a broadside from the big guns which bristled from the turrets of the warship.

Presently the cruiser flashed by wireless the well-known phrase—"The Marines have boarded the enemy and have the situation in hand." Morning found the local jails packed with prisoners. Morgues and hospitals were filled with victims of the night of horror. But Gangland had been utterly crushed. Few of the rats had escaped. Pug Gatti and his horde of hoodlums were candidates for the penitentiary—and this time there would be no obstacles in the path of swift justice.

Sax Armstrong, one arm in a sling, lunched with his father at the Calumet Club. He listened with a whimsical smile to the older man. Then he shook his head.

"No, Dad," he smiled. "Thanks, as always, for the offer. But I'm a newspaper man. I'll stick with the *Argus*. But I'll be ready at any time to help you with any job that has a real purpose. Until something like that turns up again, you will have to go on competing with the U. S. Treasury without my assistance."

The old Grizzly tried hard to look disgusted, but a twinkle of mingled amusement and admiration in the eyes rather cramps the style of registering disgust. He did, however, manage a very creditable snort.

"And I've got to hustle back to the office, now," declared Sax. "Thanks for the lunch."

"Armstrong and Son," chuckled the old Grizzly as he watched the lanky figure of his offspring leave the room. "A mighty hard team to beat!"

REAL EX-

To nearly every life comes one great adventure. On these pages your fellow-readers describe theirs. What was the most extraordinary thing that ever happened to you? (Details of this prize contest appear on page 7.)

Yankee

By Charles

ARMY headquarters in Manila desired a full report on Babuyan Island, a tiny dot of land rising out of the China Sea, off the northeast coast of Luzon. In 1924 the island was reputedly the least known of all U. S. possessions. During that year the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey cutter *Pathfinder*, commanded by Captain Oscar Swainsen, was engaged in charting the waters and coast-line of the Babuyan and Batanes Archipelago, and Military Intelligence, which I served as special agent, detailed me to secure the army's report.

Governor-general Leonard Wood of the Philippines was also interested in Babuyan Island. In 1923 his yacht the *Apo* hove to off the island and the Governor-general received a delegation of men, women, and children who swam out to his ship. To his surprise Wood learned that only Bernardo Rosales, Babuyan's uncrowned king, had visited the outer world. The other islanders had never seen common domestic animals, save pigs, and did not know that such a country as the United States existed.

Only the infirmity which was soon to cause his death prevented the Governor-general from attempting to land through the surf, and he was anxious to learn more of the island than what Rosales could tell him. On his return to Manila rumors were spread by the *Apo*'s crew that the people of Babuyan suffered frequently from raids staged by Japanese sea-wolves who masqueraded as pearlers and sponge divers.

Japanese and American destroyers were very busy on the troubled coast of China, and one decrepit vessel comprised the Philippine coast-guard. If the reports of raids were true, then Washington wanted proof to be forwarded to Tokyo, for Japan frowns on deep-sea racketeers.

It was Captain Swainsen, that intrepid savant of the sea now on the Hawaiian station, who finally landed me on Babuyan. As his sailors piled my goods beside me, the young officer gripped my hand. "I'll be back in six weeks to pick you up, weather permitting," he said. "And Freeman, I don't half like to leave you here!"

"It's duty with both of us, Captain," was my reply. "If those yellow boys come I'll take to the hills and hide out. Besides—" I glanced significantly at the high-power rifle leaning against my baggage.

Ten minutes later I was threading a jungle trail in the wake of King Bernardo Rosales. Behind us trailed the baggage-laden tribesmen who had accompanied His Maj-

PERIENCES

Here a former special agent of the military intelligence in the Philippines tells of his mission to one of the more remote and little-known islands—and of the strange way in which it was defended against a foreign raider.

Bluff

A. Freeman

esty to the beach. "We'll reach my village shortly," said the king, marching with drawn *bole* in hand and slashing at vines which hung too low to afford easy passage to a tall white man.

Finally we came to San Dionisio. It consisted of four grass-thatched huts, one of them being the palace. My hammock was slung, and I was made as comfortable as possible. That night I learned that the islanders were scattered all about in settlements like that of San Dionisio. Rosales promised that I would see all in the morning, so that they could be counted. He said that there were four hundred and eighteen healthy natives on the island, of whom four hundred and one were women and children. There was also an isolated leper colony of twenty women and children and three men.

I never saw the lepers except at a distance, for they fled at my approach. The others I enumerated. Of course these people were frankly polygamous. Rosales had three wives. Everybody except the tiny children worked. The women cultivated the soil in the clearings, made rum, rolled communal cigars, prepared bark for clothing and reared their children. The men hunted wild pigs and fished.

On the third day of my stay, when Rosales was satisfied that it was not the intention of the Government to remove his subjects to the mainland,—as the Governor-general had suggested,—he ordered the tribe to build me a house. I picked the location on a jungle-covered cliff, and the islanders set to work. It took just nine hours to cut away the brush and erect a bamboo shack, which viewed from the beach looked much like a small barracks.

At the top of a lofty palm in front of the shack I directed that a bamboo pole be lashed. To this was attached a pulley and through the pulley ran halyards. With these I could raise an American flag which I had brought so that I might notify Captain Swainsen of my whereabouts.

The morning after the house-raising I decided to distribute my gifts. They were simple. For the men I had brought some battered old band-instruments. There was red calico for everyone, and a few suits of discarded khaki uniforms for the men. Rosales received a battered cornet, for the *Apo*'s crew said that he had spoken of having a bamboo band—something common in remote Philippine districts. And for the women there were a number of mirrors.

The islanders went wild with joy. They tooted the horns, and banged on the cymbals and the bass drum. The women



surrounded me and in a laughing throng carried me to the jungle. There they pointed out their former mirror. It was a pool of water.

"I served in the band of a Scout regiment," said the king, raising the cornet to his lips. And very creditably he played the "Star-spangled Banner."

That air gave me an idea. "Hereafter," I told him, "we'll raise the flag to that music each morning and you can sound 'Reveille' on your cornet." This tickled the king's vanity, and the order went into force at once. Each morning the men assembled, lined up, and saluted the flag.

Time passed rapidly. With Rosales I hunted boar, and explored the island. It was a wonderful place. Great burial cairns which I took to be of Chinese origin dotted the jungles. There were traces of ruined temples. I came across ancient pottery, a ship's bell dated 1771, and square glass bottles that once had held the gin of Dutch pirates.

Rosales spoke to me of the raids. "Only the vessels of these pearl pirates touch here," he said. "I keep watchers on the hilltops and when a vessel is sighted the women hide in caves. The raiders are all armed, and when they land they steal our tobacco and cut down valuable wood to carry away. My men have no weapons save *bolos*, and we cannot resist."

It was a raw deal for people who should have been protected by the insular government of the Philippines. Politics, however, tied the Governor-general's hands, and only Washington could act.

Six weeks passed, and I had seen no raiders; soon it would be Thanksgiving, according to my calendar. The *Pathfinder* would arrive the day following, if on schedule.

Yankee Bluff

At any rate, as a New Englander I resolved to celebrate Thanksgiving in traditional style, as nearly as possible.

"We'll fire twenty-one guns—the national salute," I told the king. He understood and agreed. The "guns" were to be the *boom-booms*, common to all celebrations in the Philippines. These are merely sections of big bamboo, usually eight inches or more in diameter. Holes are bored between the joints and into these kerosene is poured. This kerosene originates in Java or some of the other islands of the Dutch East Indies, and is much more readily exploded than that commonly used in the United States.

After the *boom-booms* are loaded, fuses of dried leaves or paper are thrust into the half-inch holes through which the kerosene was poured. These apertures, usually two in number, admit sufficient air for a draft so that when lighted the fuses carry flame and not merely a spark.

There was plenty of kerosene available, for I had brought two cans and had used very little. Rosales and I prepared the bamboos and placed them beneath a shelter in the brush behind my shack. Several wild pigs were trapped, and domesticated pigs made ready for the slaughter. Women rolled extra cigars, and rum long buried in red clay jars was dug up. We were to have a real *fiesta*!

Thanksgiving Day dawned unusually clear, and the sun shone through the lifting fog. In the brush stood twenty-one women, each at a bamboo gun. They were to fire in succession at my command. The band was grouped near the flagstaff, wearing freshly washed khaki in honor of the *fiesta Americana*. Rosales was lipping the mouthpiece of his cornet, and I was fumbling with the flag, when down a grassy hill ran a woman waving her hands.

"The Japanese come!" she shrilled, and pointed to the east. Sure enough, a black dot was visible. Dropping my flag, I ran to my shack for my field-glasses, leveled them, gazed for a moment and handed the glasses to Rosales.

"It's the schooner of Hideoshi Mitzutani!" exclaimed the Filipino after a searching glance. "Mitzutani's the worst of the lot. I am going to send the women into hiding. What are you going to do, *señor*? If those yellow wolves find you here they will kill you."

I hesitated. Then my eyes rested on the flag. Was I, an American on an American island, to run like a whipped cur? That flag nerved me, and turning to Rosales I said: "I'll stay here. You and your men stay with me, also the women in the brush with the 'guns'. Send all others away."

A few more words of explanation and a grin swept over the king's face. "We'll try it," he muttered; then he began to bark commands. The schooner, of the traditional pearly type, was approaching rapidly.

Closer she came. I counted seventeen men on her deck and more were below. The Jap at the wheel brought her about; her sails slipped down and her anchor dropped.

"Play, Rosales!" I shouted. The band crashed into the "Star-spangled Banner." I tugged at the halyards. Up went the American flag, caught the breeze and stiffened out. Then from the brush came a sullen *boom!* More explosions followed. Rosales sounded the "Assembly" again and again. The ringing notes were echoed from the black volcanic rocks of Mount Bukis.

I hardly dared look, but when cheering arose from the islanders I did look. The Japs were getting up anchor; the motor was chugging. And within five minutes the black schooner was heading out to sea. The Yankee bluff had worked! The yellow men had decided that Babuyan was now garrisoned, and they wanted no part of it.

That very afternoon the *Apo* hove in sight, and dropped a boat bringing the welcome news radioed from the *Pathfinder* that Swainsen would pick me up next morning.

The Batanes and Babuyan archipelagos no longer suffer from piratical raids. Japan is an excellent policeman.

Allah's Holiday

A French marine detailed for police duty in Tunis got into heap trouble.

By Peter Simon

IN 1920 I was serving with the French Mediterranean fleet, then stationed at the naval port of Bizerte, Tunis. We were out along the north African coast most of the time, and it was after big maneuvers off Algiers that we put in to that ancient town late one afternoon.

After maneuvers most everyone gets shore leave, but I happened to be one of the unfortunate who were assigned to patrol duty. Together with other *quartier-maitres*, I was given two men and told to keep peace in the city. There were perhaps a dozen such patrols.

When our evening gun sounded, I noticed that the Arabs, bending their heads to the ground in the direction of the east, seemed to spend more than their usual amount of time in muttering their sundown prayers. Inquiry disclosed the fact that this was an important day in the life of the Mohammedans. It was *Aid Serrir*, the end of *Ramadan*, the thirty-day fast period of all those whose God was Allah. Again at two hours after sundown, when it was just dark enough so that the Imam could not distinguish between a white hair and a black one held at arm's-length, there was more praying; then the celebration started.

That night there was feasting and merrymaking among the Moslems. There was a holiday spirit in the air, and the cafés were filled with men from the fleet who seemed to have absorbed some of the feeling of abandonment that pervaded the city.

As the drinking increased, ship rivalry broke out, and *sous-marin* crews did battle with men attached to *croiseurs*.

All over the town *matelots* were fighting. And as though that were not enough for us on patrol to take care of, Moslems filled with religious fervor started arguments with sailors filled with Algerian wine. The result was a mad four hours for the inadequate patrols.

Officers came ashore, and among them was the commanding officer of my own boat. He raised the devil with me, saying that the fighting would have to be stopped, that it was making a bad impression on our most unruly subjects, and that there would be a curtailment of liberties in the future as a punishment for tonight's wild rioting. He also mentioned the fact that this was a sacred day among the Arabs, and that they had a right to celebrate it without interference from the sailors.

We did the best we could, but all I carried was a revolver, and my men had only bayonets. If we had had clubs like American shore police it would have been easy, but you can't shoot a man or bayonet him just for fighting. We made a number of arrests, though, but it was not until the cafés closed at midnight that the fighting was stopped. The men started for their ships, and some of



them were sorry sights. Blue blouses were torn to shreds, and instead of the small blue tam with red pompons, some of them wore native fezzes, captured as souvenirs of battle. Others had souvenirs of another nature—cut lips, flattened noses and black eyes.

Arm in arm, whole squads marched down to the docks, singing ship songs—and songs that no self-respecting ship would claim—while Arabs drew their *burnouses* tightly around their thin brown bodies and darted into doorways and other places of safety.

As the sailors departed, things quieted down somewhat, and the natives continued with their fête. There was not much doing down in the main part of town, and with my two men I started for the outlying districts to see if there were any stragglers up to mischief.

For almost a mile we climbed the worn stone steps of a narrow street that led up to the *Kasbah*, the native quarter, where the night-life of Algiers is centered.

When we arrived at the top, my companions complained of a thirst worked up by the long climb. I gave them permission to go get a drink and sat down on a step to await their return.

Back of me, and to both sides, extended alleylike streets dimly lit by the red lanterns that hung over the grilled iron outer doors of the white Moorish houses. From behind the barred and curtained windows came the strident piping of *raïtas*, those squeaky Arab flutes. The *derboucas* drummed out the barbaric rhythm of native dances. The celebration of Allah's holiday was still in progress.

Far below me the lights of the gathered warships twinkled against the dark waters of the Mediterranean. It was like looking at the heavens on a starry night. A feeling of tropic peace settled over me, and I lay back against the warm stone of the steps. I remember wondering if my failure to stop the fighting earlier in the evening would work against my application to take the examination for *second-maître* the following week.

Suddenly a door swung open up the street. A girl came out, screaming at the top of her lungs—and they were good lungs. I ran up to meet her. By her baggy, bright trousers, her bare feet and the clusters of bracelets and anklets, I knew her for an Ouled Nail dancing-girl. The district was full of those wild mountain women who come in from the foothills of the Atlas, earn their dowry and then return to marry in their own tribe.

"What is it? What has happened?" I demanded.

She smothered me with a rapid spluttering of Arabic. I couldn't understand a word. I grabbed her by the arm and shook her. "Speak French," I shouted.

I finally learned that two sailors were fighting over her—that they were killing each other. I ran through the grilled gate, threw open the big wooden door, and stumbled in on a veritable Bedlam.

It was a dimly lighted room, but in the soft glow of the shaded oil lamps I could see four white-trousered legs in a tangle under a table. Grunted French curses came from the combatants.

Three Arab musicians, two with flutes and one with a drum, huddled in a frightened group among bright cushions in a corner. A half dozen Ouled Nail girls, dressed in every color of the rainbow, shrieked and jabbered in their native tongue.

I tipped the table over and came down on the head of each of the fighting pair with my clubbed revolver. *Matelets*, like gobs and tars of other navies, have to be handled roughly to bring results. I jerked them to their feet. And then—

My knees suddenly felt very weak. I gasped.

They were not *matelets*. They were high ranking officers. The one whose scalp I had split open was my own commandant. He glared at me as he wiped his bleeding head with a handkerchief.

Looking helplessly around the room, I saw that they had their tunics off. I started to stammer an explanation of my mistake. His angry cursing scared the speech out of me, and after a couple of lame attempts that got no further than, "Je regrette—" I beat a hasty retreat.

When I returned to the ship after finishing my patrol, I felt pretty bad about the whole thing. If he wanted to, the commandant could make things tough for me, and there was no mistaking his anger. I'd probably get disagreeable duty for the rest of my enlistment. I cursed myself for being a fool, but eased my conscience with the knowledge that he was wrong too—it was a breach of ethics for an officer to appear in a place like that. Nevertheless I went to bed worried. At *l'appel* the next morning I was told to report to the commandant.

He looked anything but friendly when I appeared before him. There were black circles under his eyes and the unmistakable traces of a hangover were plain on his severe face. Just at the hair-line was a big patch of adhesive tape. I stood on one foot and then the other. At last he fixed me with a piercing stare.

"Quartier-Maître Simon," he said, "your work during the fighting last night was very commendable." He cleared his throat and shuffled some papers. "I understand that everything was quiet after the cafés closed at midnight. I don't suppose you have anything else to report, have you?" I couldn't be sure, but I thought I saw one slightly discolored eyelid drop in the suspicion of a wink.

"Nothing to report, Commandant," I replied.

"Fine, Simon," he said, a thin smile spreading over his face. "And by the way, I believe you have made an application to take the examination for a rise in grade. It will give me pleasure to recommend you. That is all."

I saluted and left, treading on air. I celebrated Allah's holiday just twenty-four hours late.

A Life for an Eye

A newspaper man is rescued from desperate danger in a tough mining town.

By **Dion
De Jurnel**

recognized no law—not even the Prohibition law. Fifty-two saloons operated twenty-four hours a day in two blocks of Main Street leading back from the river. Robbery and murder went unpunished, for no jury dared convict a member or hireling of the reigning class.

I had left my traveling-bag, typewriter and camera in the hotel in an adjoining town, and informed no one of my profession or business in Deeprock. I wanted them to think I was just a johnny up from the big town for a slug or two of Canadian whisky and a whirl at faro; and it seemed that I was thus appraised, for my reception everywhere was cordial.

About one o'clock in the morning after my first day there, I sauntered into a Chinese café in an alley back of a big Main Street dive. While eating a bite and studying the crowd of gamblers, motley women, miners, loggers, and high-school kids, my glance fell on a little one-eyed Chinese waiter.

The lids of his eyeless socket were parted, contrary to the usual condition, and the exposed interior of the socket was red and angry-looking.

As he passed my table with a tray, I addressed him softly in the pidgin lingo I had learned on the Coast. Started, he paused an instant, nodded, then went on to finish his errand.

After a time, he returned to my table. My familiarity with the Coast jargon, which he also used, won his confidence, and he readily told me about some of the more flashy and picturesque figures in the café. When I indicated a huge black-browed south-of-Europe villain seated near the front door, the waiter's eyes darted a sudden gleam of venomous fire, and turning his back toward the subject of my query, he gently touched his empty eye-socket with a lean forefinger.

"Him do," he breathed, in a whisper. "Him push 'um eye out with big finger!"

"What?" I ejaculated. "He what?"

The Chinese clucked, a rattling sound, alive with hate. "Him dlunk, makee bobbery this place. Me tell 'um stop. Him laugh, say me see too muchee—push 'um out eye."

"What did you do?"

"Me velly sick. Me yellup big. Him say me hear too muchee, mebbeso him cut 'um off ears. Him say me yellup some more, him pull 'um out tongue."

"Did you—"

"Like hellee!" the Chinese cut me off. "Him Tony Salsini—him big boss. Him killee plenty men. Me no can do. Me keep ears, me keep tongue."

Again came that sibilantly crackling *cluck*, and the

THE evil reputation of the town which we will call Deeprock—located in a ten-mile strip of No-Man's Land then lying between the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and the northern boundary of Wisconsin—had long been familiar to me when my chief in Detroit ordered me to go up there and "write up the town." But, like nearly everybody else in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, I had heavily discounted all that I had heard.

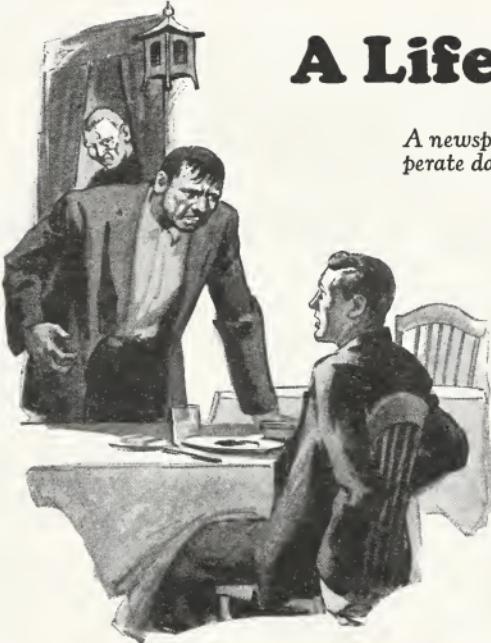
Born and raised in the old West, from infancy I had lived in bad towns and known bad men. One of my earliest memories is that of a "necktie-party" in Cañon City, Colorado, for which my father furnished the braided reata with a brass ring on one end.

Later, I had worked on a San Francisco paper and messed up with the Chinese who were then doing quite a bit of hatchet work at frequent intervals. And still later, I had covered from one to three violent deaths a week in a high, wide and handsome mining-camp in Montana.

Too, I knew at first hand quite a bit about Detroit's own little sectors borrowed from Hades—Hamtramck, River Rouge and Ecorse. And it was because I knew bad men and bad towns, probably, that the State editor sent me up to Deeprock, reputed to be the worst town in the western hemisphere. That was in 1923.

My skepticism vanished as soon as I landed in the town I had come so far to explore and exploit.

The "No-Man's Land" of the Wisconsin-Michigan wilderness is no more. The United States Supreme Court, after a century of argument, has awarded it to Wisconsin. Then, a decade ago, it was a resort for miners and loggers and occasional city gunmen on vacation. It was controlled by the vice, saloon and gambling fraternity. They



sandal-footed waiter moved away. "What a town!" I thought, and steeled myself to swallow the food before me—for which I now had no taste. . . .

My story created a stir. A Madison paper copied it from the Detroit paper and called on State and Federal authorities to give Deeprock a dry-cleaning. And they did. For forty-eight hours, every joint and dive was locked up tight. Then they threw the locks into the river, and resumed business as usual.

WHEN I wrote the story, I did not foresee that within a fortnight the State editor would send me back to Deeprock to cover a fiendish murder which Salvini was charged with committing. I could have begged off, but what reporter would do that? I went, partly out of bravado, partly out of professional pride, and partly, I confess, to see just how much had been gained for the cause of law, order and decency by the publication of my story.

I arrived in Deeprock foolishly thinking that I would interview the murderer through an iron grill. But upon calling first on the justice of the peace for a statement of the case, I found him sick in bed.

"Has Salvini been arrested?" I asked.

"I don't know," the magistrate replied feebly.

His bed was in a corner of the room which he used also as an office. His official desk stood in the middle of the grimy room, its flat top littered with papers and books, which ironically included the Civil and Criminal Codes of Wisconsin. Idly my eyes roved over the litter. Then I got a shock.

Spread out beneath my gaze was the familiar official form of a warrant of arrest, filled out; and before my eye was the name of the fiend—Antonio Salvini!

"Why, the marshal hasn't even got the warrant for Salvini!" I snapped. "Salvini isn't under arrest!"

"Son," the justice spoke softly, but without a trace of feebleness, "what you don't know, don't say and don't do in this man's town won't hurt you. Understand?"

I nodded and left; but I boiled inside as I mulled over the situation. "I'll stick around a day or two, by thunder, and see just what happens," I decided.

I didn't dare send a story to my paper; I dared do nothing that would tip anyone off to my mission in the town. I knew the justice would not betray me, for he was a white man even if he was in mortal fear of the ruling vermin.

Recalling the Chinese waiter with the eyeless socket, I sauntered around to his restaurant. It was mid-forenoon and there were no other customers. I had ordered a meal and we were chatting amiably when the door opened and in walked Tony Salvini—the man who had gouged out the waiter's eye, and who was now "wanted" for a fiendish murder!

The big boss looked every bit as vicious and brutal as he had the first time I saw him. In fact, his air of conscious, reptilian strength seemed even accentuated. He sought a table next the wall and sat down.

I tried to eat calmly the meal in front of me. The waiter had vanished in the kitchen, and another Oriental in black cassock and sandals came to take Salvini's order.

As the latter glanced carelessly past the waiter, he made a sudden, involuntary movement. Then he rose and came straight toward me.

A chill, a shiver, an indescribable sensation crawled down my spine, and then came an awful, empty feeling in my stomach. For in the moment that beast rose from his chair, I knew what was coming and was paralyzed.

I weighed no more than a hundred and ten; Salvini was twice as big, and as ruthless as a Juggernaut.

Somehow I kept my face calm and met his stare coolly. His mouth, half open, was twisted in a sneer, exposing teeth that to me looked like fangs.

Facing me across the table, he snarled contemptuously.

"I know you!" he breathed. "You don't like Deeprock, hey, but you come back to us, hey? Come back to see, maybe, if Salvini is still doing business? Yes, Salvini is still busy—very busy. But you—you are through—now!"

A hairy, bearlike paw flashed toward me. I ducked, leaped backward, and sped round the table. Salvini followed.

His hand once more lashed out and this time caught the side of my head with a blow like that of a sledgehammer. I staggered, stumbled, lurched against one table, and then sprawled crookedly upon another table across the aisle.

The big boss loomed over me. His hairy hands closed around my skull. "Oh, God!" I cried aloud, as two thumbs—the "big fingers" mentioned by the Chinese waiter—bored in against my eyeballs, while a diabolical chuckle floated thinny into my ears.

"You see too much," I heard the brute above me snarl. "You'll see no more from now on. You write too much—I'll take your fingers, too."

His voice stopped. A quick gasp came from his twisted lips. The gouging fingers relaxed, and those monstrous, crushing hands fell away from my head. The big hulk emitted a single groan, then slumped to the floor with a jar that shook the flimsy shack.

The next I knew, a firm, gentle hand was lifting my head. Then a napkin wrung out of cold water laved my smarting eyes and face. Quick, sandaled footsteps darted about on all sides. Then something heavy was dragged along the floor toward the kitchen and the hidden entry to a more hidden burrow far underground.

I struggled to sit up, but that firm hand held me down. "No make 'um bobbery," said a sibilant voice. "Keep 'um eyes shut, mebbeso you see *not* too much."

I knew that voice and was reassured. Then slowly my brain ceased to burn. Again the cold napkin was pressed gently upon my agonized eyeballs, and I lay gratefully quiescent. After a time, the Chinese waiter removed the napkin.

"Now you all right—can sit up," he said softly.

I DID so. A dizzy glance showed the room empty excepting for the waiter and me.

"Where—" I began vacuously.

The waiter interrupted.

"Him gone," he answered, and once again he clucked—but this time it was a happy, carefree cluck. "Him be gone long time." He slowly traced a circle round his eyeless socket. "Him push 'um out eye of me—do so for you, mebbeso." Again the happy cluck. "But me send 'um way, long time! You *sabe*?"

From the folds of the black cassock, the waiter's long, lean fingers drew forth a napkin in which was wrapped a weapon common to every kitchen—a slicing knife with a razor-keen blade nearly a foot in length. Unwinding the napkin, he wiped the blade and laid it upon the table.

I hastily slid to the floor and stood on wobbly legs. The whole story cleared to my recovering senses.

"You see 'um plenty one time," I said, trying to laugh. A happy grin flitted across the waiter's face. Quickly, I extended my hand and he accepted it gravely.

"You see 'um *nothing*?" he asked earnestly.

"Me see 'um *nothing*," I replied, making it a pledge.

And that is how law and order in Deeprock escaped the risky duty of bringing Antonio Salvini to trial for his last crime. Also it was why I wired to my chief: "Story a flop. Salvini has left the country."

Behind Enemy Lines

*An American with the
British forces on the
Somme records a dan-
gerous exploit.*

By **H. Shenvale**

MY journey through the German first-line defenses and back again is a matter of record; yet from a military point of view it was inefficient and not at all the usual method of handling such a problem.

I am an American, but I served with a line regiment of the British Expeditionary Force, and on August 18, 1916, was in position on the Somme front almost facing Beaumont. As will be recalled, the Somme front at that time was a continuous fight of aggression on the part of the Allies, starting off with a bang in midsummer.

Our artillery waxed sarcastic when attached air squadrons failed day after day to locate a certain battery of enemy field-guns which was scoring pretty heavily. The airplanes picked out dozens of batteries, marked them on their maps, and our heavy guns did the rest; but this one battery they could not locate and this fact was soon borne to us, the miserable infantry, slopping in the mud of the trenches. It became a topic of conversation and speculation; meanwhile shells screamed back and forth overhead.

On the 20th, I suggested that some one sally forth and get behind the enemy lines and locate that battery. I had in mind our efficient scouts under Sergeant Laylen. My superior jestingly remarked (on account of my being American) that British officers never ordered a man to go where they would not go themselves. And, being blessed with a hair-trigger temper and pride, I retorted that I was prepared to go myself. My superior tried to dissuade me, but I remained firm; finally he consented and issued the order in due form.

From Sergeant Laylen I obtained permission to take along one of his scouts, a tried and fearless man who was then on a ration-party bound for the rear to bring up supplies. That night, in darkness black as pitch, they brought up rations all right—but somehow went along the sunken road passing from our position through that of the enemy, and no doubt became confused; anyway they continued right on past the position and into the hands of the Germans! So I had lost my man, and rather than take along an untried man I decided to go alone.

On the night of the 21st, I left the trench and crawled out into No Man's Land to make an effort to get through the enemy lines. My superior had insisted that I keep within the international law by wearing my own uniform,



In this way, if captured alive, I could not be shot as a spy. While the wearing of the British uniform would handicap me somewhat, nevertheless the thought of a firing-squad overcame any desire I had to dress entirely in the uniform of the enemy, although the wearing of one of their great-coats and helmets would be permissible.

The first lucky break I had was the time of starting, for I had no sooner reached the enemy wire entanglements and wormed through them, than I heard an approaching body of men. Into a shell-hole I flopped. It was a wiring-party, coming out to repair the wire. Draped on the sides of the shell-hole were two corpses, with others not far away. With my presence, there were three "bodies" at the shell-hole; I attempted to look as dead as I could. The party silently passed the hole and soon sounds of careful repairing came to my ears. It had been raining hard and most of them wore greatcoats, but now the rain was over, and the air was warm and sticky. Men began shedding their great-coats, as also did the officer, and he placed his coat a little apart from the others.

I wanted that coat—but how to get it? I estimated my chances of getting it unobserved and resolved to try it. I did—and soon was crouching in another hole, dressed in the officer's coat and a helmet from one of the dead.

The wiring-party started back and I allowed a few to get ahead before I arose and followed them. I kept near enough to them to be thought one of them. Others came behind me. It was a strange sensation indeed. I heard the challenge from the trench, and the answer. In another few moments I was standing in the enemy first-line trench!

Quickly sizing things up, I saw the wiring-party turn to the right, so I turned casually left. The German soldiers merely glanced at me, then seeing the officer's insignia they turned and became busily engaged in their duty of watching. I walked on, not too hurriedly, although I felt like running. I hoped to come to a communication-trench leading to their rear, before I met any German officer. At last there was a communication-trench! I sighed with relief as I turned north.

I met several Germans on the way along that trench, but none did more than to pass a greeting—to which I replied only by a haughty movement of a hand. I passed where the second and then the third lines intersected with the

communication-trench and finally came to where the trench came out on top near a road. Looking about quickly, I hastily concealed myself back from the road and studied my position. The moon had come out dimly from behind the storm-clouds. I did not know whether to curse it or bless it—anyway, it showed me, over on the right, some woods by which I knew exactly where I was on the sector map. I also knew that near the far corner of those woods was a civilian cemetery which was by mutual agreement supposedly immune from shelling. To that cemetery I made my way; the cemetery would be a safer place for me.

I reached the cemetery after avoiding two incoming parties. Crouched at last in the burial-ground, I studied what next to do; I had my mind on getting over to a slope about a mile back where I thought the batteries might be. Suddenly two detonations almost at my ear sent me hugging the ground. Then the truth dawned on me, the luckiest fellow who ever nosed around—the hidden guns were right here in the cemetery! It was no wonder the planes could not locate them; they would not think of suspecting the cemetery, and the Germans had pulled a slick one.

But now to get back! Crouching, hiding and avoiding many moving parties, I at last gained the entrance to the communication-trench again. There I lost a good two hours waiting for some party going in. I felt it would be wiser to attach myself to some moving bunch, and at last my wait was rewarded, for along came a fairly large group. They filed into the communication-trench and I followed at a distance. An officer, at first in the lead, dropped to the rear and looked back at me. After a time he again looked back and I saw he expected me to come up with him. This would have been fatal, for I spoke no German.

At last, looking back again, he stopped. He was waiting

for me! I deliberately slowed up so that when I came up with him there would be lots of distance between us and the main body, for I foresaw trouble.

He said something to me when I came level with him; when I did not answer he spoke more sharply. I knew I must act—whipping out my automatic I jammed it against his stomach and he backed against the trench. With my left hand I swept off his helmet and brought the automatic down on his bare head. He collapsed without a sound.

No time must be lost now! I hurried after the party ahead and reached the first-line trench. I turned left. My reasoning told me it would be fatal to try going over the top. I would go on to that sunken road on the left of the position. Walking along that trench was a nightmare—but at last I reached where the sunken road passed through. There I saw two machine-guns and crews in position!

I stood casually near for a few moments. Back in the communication-trench I knew the officer must be regaining his senses, and my danger was increasing. The machine-gun crews were now regarding me curiously, so I turned about and went back a little way into the trench; then, taking a chance, I jumped to the top and dashed to the shelter of the prickly hedge bordering the sunken road. I made it. It was no trick then to get back to my own lines and report. Our artillery proceeded to dig up that cemetery in Square 73—and the record is:

Aug. 21st. Capt. H. Shenvale, B Company, detailed special duty.

Aug. 22nd. A. m. Capt. H. Shenvale, B Company, returned. Reports enemy battery cemetery, Square 73.

And later:

Aug. 22nd. Artillery report, air verification, enemy battery destroyed in cemetery, Square 73.

The Miner's Right

By Jack McLaren

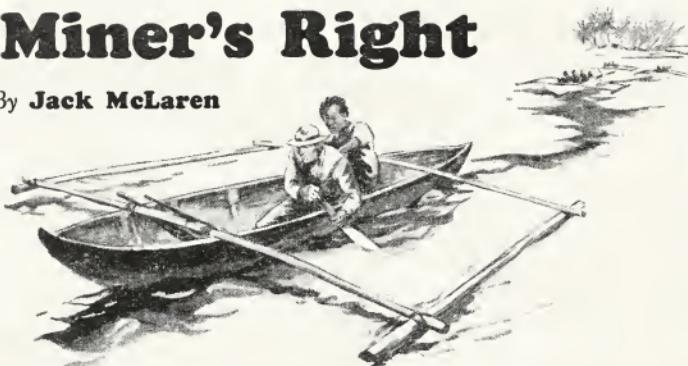
Prospecting in Australia, this reader had a bit of luck that led to a desperate race for Thursday Island.

THE need to obtain a certain piece of paper was the cause of one of the strangest journeys of my life.

The piece of paper was a "Miner's Right" and it happened at Cape York, that great and little-known North Australian peninsula which forms the eastern shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

I had a coconut-plantation at the very tip of the Cape and with an aborigine called Billy I set forth one day to explore some of the great territory to the south of me.

We traveled on foot, with packs on back, and planned to be away about a week. We depended chiefly on firearms to obtain our food.



Now, the Cape York peninsula is a remarkable piece of country. You never know what you may find there. At any time you might stumble in among a clump of valuable sandalwood trees, and all kinds of minerals are represented there—tin, wolfram, copper, gold. So I was not altogether surprised to find one morning that we had camped almost on top of a quartz reef. But what was of great interest was the discovery of specks of gold in it.

In a very little while I had traced them to what was called a "mullocky-leader"—that is, a kind of small branch reef composed of softer quartz mixed with clay. The specks were thick here, giving promise of gold in quantity.

"Look, Billy!" I cried to my companion. "What do you think of that, eh?" But Billy showed no excitement. As a member of the most primitive race of people in the world, people who were merely nomadic hunters and nothing else, gold didn't mean anything to him—it was merely shiny stone.

Standing there looking at that leader, I grew busy with plans for working it—how first of all I would obtain a Miner's Right, which was vitally necessary before I could make the leader my property, and then bring aborigines from the plantation and set them to work digging and crushing the ore. I had great visions of an easy fortune.

Suddenly Billy, who had been wandering about the quartz reef, gave a cry: "I say, Boss—you see this?"

"See what?" I asked.

He pointed to the ground.

"Some other feller been here," he said. "A feller on horseback."

The marks were so faint that I could scarcely see them, but to the astonishing sight and understanding of the black fellow they and their meaning were like an open book.

"He been here yeste'day," he said; then, examining the marks farther: "He got off horse here, and walked along the reef. And look, Boss—he been find the leader too!"

With a feeling of great apprehension I looked at the place indicated. The soft quartz of the top of the leader had been broken in various places. Here and there it had been gouged open for quite a little distance, revealing the gold in it very clearly. The work had been done with some inefficient implement such as a stone, but it was clear that the person who had done it knew what he was about, knew the significance and promise of that leader.

I had been forestalled, and with a cold feeling at my heart I took a quick look round the vicinity, expecting to find a stake or other indication that the place had been claimed. But there was none.

I SAW quite clearly what had happened. Before one could stake out a claim one must have a Miner's Right. This man who had preceded me by only a few hours—this stockman—evidently had no such right, just as I hadn't one. But there was no doubt he would get one as soon as possible and return.

Billy concluded his examination of the footprints: "And then he get on horse again and go off this way." He pointed south.

I thought quickly. The stockman would be making for a place called Ebagoolah, a small mining center where he could obtain his Miner's Right. The nearest place for me to get my Miner's Right was Thursday Island, a port and pearlring center away to the northward. The distance to Ebagoolah was about two hundred miles. The distance to Thursday Island was about one hundred miles. It was to be a race.

We started at once, making straight for the Gulf of Carpentaria coast. I hoped there to be able to find a pearlring-lugger or other vessel which would take us to Thursday Island. But immediately I encountered difficulties. First, there was Billy. Son of an indolent race, averse to labor of any kind, he saw no reason for haste.

"What for go plenty quick all the time, Boss?" he asked sullenly. "Aint we got tomorrow, and next tomorrow, and plenty tomorrow?" It was no use trying to explain about the Miner's Right. He wouldn't have understood.

Before the end of the day he pretended to go lame, and it was only when I threatened to thrash him that he recovered. After that I made him walk in front of me with his gun, and at night took the weapon away from him. Billy was an admirable person in many ways, but he was

still a savage, and I was not in the mood to chance getting a shot in the back or my brains blown out while I slept.

I am sure he would have deserted me but for the fact that we were in the territory of tribes of blacks who would certainly make it hot for any solitary member of another tribe they might catch. And I almost wished he would desert me—there is nothing more unpleasant than traveling with a sulky companion.

WE came to the Gulf on a bright fresh morning; the first thing that caught our eyes were the sails of a lugger bowling along to the northward. We made a fire and heaped it with green bushes so as to make a tall thick column of smoke. Then we held a sheet of bark over the smoke so as to cut off the column for a second or two—a primitive form of signaling used by the blacks a great deal.

But the lugger took no notice of the signal, though we repeated it and repeated it till the vessel was out of sight. We had the same ill success with another lugger that showed up later.

I decided there was no use in wasting any more time here. The only thing to do was to tramp it. The farther north we made, the nearer we got to Thursday Island, the better were our chances of getting a vessel.

Now, I have tramped in all sorts of difficult places, but never in one more difficult than this. The beach was steeply sloped and of soft deep sand. We sank in it; every step was a profound effort. Each foot had to be lifted clear before the next could be put down. And all the while we slipped and slithered down the slope.

After a bit we abandoned the beach and sought a parallel course inland. But here we were confronted by great clay pans of slimy sticky mud, and were forced back to the beach, making our way as best we could through the soft sand. Before the end of an hour I felt I could not go on any longer. The terrific heat of the tropical sun and the dreadful glare of the sea added to our distress. Even Billy, accustomed as he was to all kinds of conditions, suffered considerably, the sweat pouring down his smoky black face and his eyes growing bloodshot.

A fear came to me that perhaps there were miles upon miles of this soft sand, in which case it was utterly of no use our going on. We could never do it. I had a horrible vision of the pair of us being stuck there in the sand, succumbing to it—and thirst. Water was rapidly becoming a problem with us. All we had was contained in a pair of small water-bottles which hitherto we had replenished from streams as we went along. But at this rate of progress it was going to be a long time indeed before we came to any stream. Furthermore, the sand worked its way into the locks of our firearms and rendered them useless. We had no way of getting at the mechanism, and indeed it was not until we placed them in the hands of a gunsmith at Thursday Island that they were of use again.

We rested frequently. The surface of the sand was so hot that it seemed almost actually to burn the flesh where it touched it. Billy's bare feet suffered considerably. His sulkiness was replaced by anxiety.

"I say, Boss, this no good—no! Bad place this!" he muttered. "S'pose we not careful, you and me finish!"

I wished I had gone back up the peninsula by the way we had come down it—which was along its center, away from the coast. It would have been quicker in the end.

But all things come to an end, even bad things, and after about two hours we found that the sand was gradually becoming firmer, and at length it was so hard that our feet scarcely made marks on it. The relief was so great that we chatted animatedly as we went along, and when in due course we came to a tree-lined little stream we threw ourselves down in its shade and rested for an hour.

For a while after that the journey was easy enough, and I had visions of reaching Thursday Island, obtaining the Miner's Right, and being back at the gold-bearing leader long before my rival. I pressed on eagerly.

But after a bit another difficulty arose. The beach ended in a mangrove-swamp, close-growing and heavily foliated and extending away inland. To go round it would have taken perhaps a day, or more. The only thing to do was to go through it.

It was a peculiar method of traveling. The trees were of a variety known as "hooped mangroves." That is to say, their roots stood up above the surface in the shape of half hoops. Our only means of progress was by stepping from one hoop to another, the while clinging to the branches or trunks of the trees. Billy managed it easily enough; he had a trick of taking a firm grip of the roots with his bare toes. But often I slipped and went floundering into the slimy knee-deep water of the swamp. Sometimes a hoop would break and send me plunging.

The whole place was wrapped in a kind of half darkness that was eerie indeed. Strange sounds haunted it. There was a heavy dragging sound as some creature entered the water from a log or from the roots—a crocodile. There was the harsh squawk of swamp birds, and the flopping into and about the water of slimy big-eyed creatures that looked like a cross between a frog and a lizard. And all about was a smell of dead and rotting vegetation, a dank unhealthy smell.

With all this slipping and falling I was cut and scratched quite a bit—a matter which alarmed Billy very much.

"Look out, Boss," he warned. "If your blood get into the water the crocodiles, they will smell it and come quick, so that when you fall into the water they grab you! You look out good!" From then on I was very careful indeed how I proceeded.

At length the swamp ended and we came out again on the beach. The distance through the mangroves had been only about a mile, but it seemed we had been hours doing it, and with the object of trying to make up for lost time we tramped on well into the night, camping for an hour or two beneath some trees above the beach, then going on.

A little before dawn we came to a river-mouth, half a mile across at least. At low water it would have been a mere trickle which we could easily have waded across. But now the tide was full in and the river was just a wide sheet of deep water. As it was infested with crocodiles, swimming it was quite out of the question. We would have to wait until the tide went down, a delay of six hours or more. It was annoying, but there was nothing else for it.

SUDDENLY, however, Billy sniffed and held up a hand to enjoin silence.

"Can you smell it, Boss?" he whispered.

"Smell what?" I asked in the same low tone.

For a moment Billy made no answer, then he whispered: "Smoke! Smoke of a camp-fire! Some blacks camp here, I think."

He went to the edge of the water and looked along the river's bank, then motioned me to come.

"There!" he whispered, pointing. "You see it?"

On the same side of the river as that on which we stood was a tiny spot of fire, and near it the shadowy shapes of sleeping blacks. We prepared to creep quietly away. The blacks of this region had a very bad reputation and there was no knowing what might happen should they wake and discover us. But suddenly I made out some dark shapes on the water immediately opposite where the blacks slept.

"Wait, Billy!" I whispered. "They've got canoes!"

Billy made a clicking noise with his teeth, a native method of expressing satisfaction. "Good," he breathed,

and we looked at one another. Here was a way of crossing the river!

A moment later we were creeping toward those shadowy craft. It was near the dawn now and with every second the forms of the blacks grew clearer. There were forty of them, all huddled about the ground, and a number of dogs, lean, hungry-looking creatures of the dingo or wild-dog kind.

We were greatly afraid those dogs would scent us and give the alarm. Already one or two were sniffing the air suspiciously. We moved with the utmost caution. In another ten minutes or so it would be full light, and even if the dogs did not scent us they would see us. Never have I known a few minutes so drawn out as those which were occupied in creeping to those canoes. Had our fire arms been in working-order there would have been little to fear; two men with guns could hold back a whole horde of blacks armed only with spears and clubs. But, as it was, the risk of awakening those blacks was one we did not dare to take.

LIKE a pair of shadows we crept on. When we were less than ten yards from the camp one of the dogs barked and we stopped, lying flat on the sand. The dog barked again, and to my horror there came the voice of one of the blacks. But soon all was quiet again. The black had merely rebuked the dog for barking and awakening him.

We crept on, and presently crawled into the water and waded to the nearest canoe, being careful not to make the slightest splash. In the same cautious manner we got into the craft. It was an extremely crude affair, being merely a very roughly hollowed log, most unstable and insecure looking. For paddles there were a number of pieces of split slabs. The canoe was tied to a spear driven upright into the river-bed. Quietly freeing it from this stake, we took up the paddles and set forth to cross the river.

The blacks still slept. It was no easy task sending that crude craft along. For one thing it was extremely heavy and sluggish, a clumsy affair indeed for two men to handle. It was the sort of craft that needed a dozen or more men. For another thing, it leaked badly and most of the time was more than half submerged. Every now and again we had to stop paddling and splash out the water with o' hands, there being no bail on board. This splashing of the water was almost our undoing. In the stillness of the early morning the sound of it reached the shore and set the dogs barking. For a time the blacks took no notice, but with the continued barking first one and then another sat up and looked around to see what it was all about. We were now three-quarters of the way across—and just a well too!

For as soon as the blacks spotted us and realized what was happening, they set up a tremendous yelling and wakened the others, and there was a great grabbing up of spears, and a number of the men rushed to the water's edge and boarded the canoes and came after us.

We put on our best speed, but they rapidly gained on us all shouting and yelling as they came. But we had to great a start for them, and soon our craft ran up on the shore, and we were out of it and away.

On reaching the shore after us, the blacks leaped out to continue the pursuit. The situation was decidedly nasty, and there is no telling how it might have turned out if Billy and I had not tried a bluff.

Halting, we turned, faced the oncoming blacks and fitted our useless firearms to our shoulders as though we were taking careful aim. The blacks stopped. They knew about firearms and their power. No one of them was game to charge on at those weapons. With a low-angled yelling and shaking of spears they slowly

to the canoes and boarded them. Not until they were back at their camp did Billy and I move.

Then as we started again Billy gave a sigh of relief. "By m, Boss, I been plenty fright that time!" And I had to confess that I had been "plenty fright" too.

All through the morning we made good progress, and by midday halted and had a couple of hours' sleep in the shade of some trees. The strain was beginning to tell and I felt I could have slept on. But there was no time to lose. The only consolation was that my rival, not knowing that some one else had discovered the leader and therefore there was need for haste, perhaps would take things rather easily.

DURING the next three days I desperately hoped this was so. The race for the Miner's Right was a matter of overcoming one difficulty after another. There was a place where the beach ended abruptly in a long outcrop of boulders so large and difficult to traverse that we were forced to strike inland and make our way around them.

Here we encountered a great area of tall wallaby grass, and were compelled to make our way through it. Wallaby grass grows twelve or more feet high and exceedingly thick and close together. We had to beat our way through it, smash it down with our hands and our guns the best way we could. It was terrifically hard work, and with the grass shutting out from us what wind there was, it was stifling. The seeds and fibers of the grass flew about and got in our noses, causing us to sneeze constantly. The fiber also got in our eyes, nearly blinding us. We had to rest frequently.

Encompassed like that by the grass, it was difficult to know our direction, and a horrible fear came to me that we might get lost there in it.

But at length the grass grew thinner and we came out of it, a poor battered pair of humans so near to utter exhaustion that all we could do was to throw ourselves flat on the ground and for an hour or more just lie there.

Another patch of impassable boulders caused us to make a detour which took us through a stretch of what is called pot-hole country. Pot-hole country, which is said to be caused by mound-building insects, can best be described as looking like an area of half-finished drains. These drains, in unnumbered thousands, were each knee-deep and more than a few yards long, and all covered with tusky grass and stunted trees. Walking this country meant following a drain to its end—a distance maybe of twenty feet, then climbing over the earth at the end into the next drain and repeating the process. As the drains run at all angles one has to be at considerable pains to find those that lead somewhat in the desired direction. For the best part of an afternoon Billy and I made our way over this pot-hole country. I don't know of any traveling more exasperating than this. It was a most tremendous relief to be clear of it at last.

Then we came to a dry area, with never a sign of a stream of any kind, and for the whole of a day and a night were without a drink. That may not sound very long, but in that parched country, with the sun blazing down pitilessly for every moment of the twelve hours of the day, it was almost more than we could endure. Further, we did not know how long it might be before we came to a stream, and this uncertainty was almost as bad as the thirst itself. Before the end of that waterless day my tongue was swollen, and breathing was becoming difficult. Billy, bushman though he was, suffered only a little less. Next morning, however, we came to a sand-spring, and in this respect at last we were well again.

Hunger, too, began to press, for with our rifles out of action we were unable to obtain any game. However, we managed to capture some wild duck in a swamp, by aling himself among the reeds with just his head

above the water. For two hours or more he crouched there, keeping utterly motionless as I think only an Australian aborigine can, and when at length the ducks came swimming in and about the reeds he grasped one from underneath by the legs. This is an old trick of the aborigines. We cooked the ducks then in the aboriginal way of covering them with clay as they stood and baking them in the hot ashes of a fire. When taken out of the ashes the clay came away easily with the feathers adhering to it, leaving the birds perfectly and cleanly cooked.

Thus we made our strenuous way in the race for the Miner's Right. At length we came in sight of a place called Red Island, which was an anchorage where pearl and other craft often put in, and was a kind of jumping-off place for Thursday Island. I could see a vessel was already there, preparing to sail; her mainsail was already up. But before I could reach it there was another delay.

Rounding a corner of the beach we came across a small tribe of friendly blacks. They were making a great noise of wailing and at sight of me one of the men came running. A terrible thing had happened, he cried in effect. In swimming a stream near by one of the women of the tribe had been gashed by a crocodile and it seemed she was likely to die. Could I do anything to help her?

I looked at the vessel at Red Island. I wanted to catch that vessel. She would sail at any minute, and I knew not where there would be another. Minutes were precious indeed. I had a quick look at the woman. She was in a bad way, the gash extending from her hip almost to her knee, and being very deep indeed. The blacks had done nothing and the wound was filthy. I made them stop their wailing and bring water and wash the wound, and with some tea-tree bark, which was pliable almost as cloth, bind it up. That seemed to be all I could do—and I hurried on. I don't know whether my rough and ready medical services really did help, but I was glad to learn later that the woman recovered.

But the delay had done its work. Just before I reached the harbor the other sails of the vessel went up and she went winging away. I tell you I felt pretty sick at that!

Then suddenly to my surprise I saw the vessel swing, turn, and come back into the harbor. A boat was lowered and in a few minutes the Captain was with me on the beach.

"I saw by my glass that you were a white man," he said, "and as one sees a white man in these parts only once in a blue moon I thought I'd come back and see who you were and if you wanted anything."

"Want anything?" I cried. "I want to get to Thursday Island, if you're going that way."

"I just am!" was his reply. "Come on board." A few minutes later we were speeding away.

I LANDED at Thursday Island that evening and first thing next morning obtained from the Warden my Miner's Right, and by midday was on the way back to the place of the "mullocky-leader."

But the journey back had none of the difficulties of the other journey, being made comfortably in a chartered cutter which landed me on the point of the beach an easy walk from the place of the leader.

At once I drove in my stake and attached to it a document bearing the number of my Miner's Right. The leader was mine! There was no sign of my rival; it was not, indeed, until a day later that he appeared. Quite unaware of any rivalry in the matter, he had taken his time.

And the financial result? There was not a fortune in the leader, but it paid quite well. It would, however, have had to be a very rich leader indeed to compensate for the dangers and difficulties of that journey.

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